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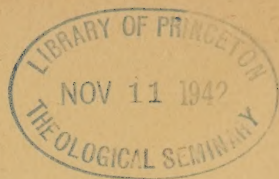


Colombia



GUATAVITA, THE LAKE OF EL DORADO

Colombia



GATEWAY TO SOUTH AMERICA

By

Kathleen Romoli



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*To the friends whose special knowledge
and unfailing kindness helped me
to gather and check the material for these chapters,
in gratitude.*

K.R.

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Colombia

. . . *the New Realm of Granada, in which
there has been, and is, such abundance of riches
and so many choice treasures both spiritual and
material* . . . FRAY PEDRO DE AGUADO
Preface to the Recopilacion Historial, c. 1575

CHAPTER I

Panorama

IF YOU WERE to drop a plummet line 2,000 miles due south from the Statue of Liberty, it would strike Barranquilla, a gleaming busy city sprawling in hot sunlight just east of Panamá, where the Río Magdalena empties into the sea.

Barranquilla is the front door to Colombia, and behind it lie the steaming jungles and snow-topped mountains, the cities and plantations and endless empty llanos, the coffee and oil and gold of a country more than twice the size of France.

Twenty years ago all this was very far away. Bogotá, the capital established high in the interior by Jiménez de Quesada and his magnificent ruffians a century before the Pilgrims landed at Plymouth Rock, stood at the end of long river navigation—how long, depended on the season, the amount of water and the ability of the pilot to dodge sandbanks. Distances were calculated in days, or weeks, of muleback, and standard equipment for the tourist included hammocks and tinned goods, mosquito bars and ponchos in boy-scout assortment.

These things have not disappeared, praise be, but they are no longer the common coin of ordinary life. There have been changes so great and so rapid in Colombia that quite young people can look back on their schooldays as if they were remembering fourscore years and ten; a man who left his country during the last war and came back today might feel own brother to Rip Van Winkle. The progress is so urgent that the I-remember-when school of conversation is inevitable, even with residents of a few years' standing: I remember when we filtered all our water from the river; I remember when it took

ten days to get to Bucaramanga; I remember when there were no paved streets in town; I remember when this suburb was empty pasture. It gives one a rather dizzy feeling, as if the present were hustling the future, eluding one's grasp.

The rugged mountain wastes, the timeless stretch of plains, the jungles and lonely rivers are all there—but so are air-conditioned office buildings and electric kitchens and interior-decorated houses. Mules are still essential, but city streets are choked with shiny American automobiles, and the hair-raising Andean roads are dusty with trucks and buses and this year's sedans. Above all, men now have wings. Sleek airplanes cast their punctual shadow on forests that have never known the feet of men, come down in villages that never saw a road or a cart; Indians in homespun smocks and tiger necklaces hardly glance up when the motors hum overhead.

Because of air travel, New Yorkers can leave their offices at the end of the day and be in Barranquilla the next afternoon; between sunup and dusk Colombians can have morning coffee at home and cocktails in Miami—always provided that they have assembled beforehand those documents testifying to their mental and physical health, civil status, financial solvency, blameless life and innocent intentions which both countries require before affixing their magic visas.

If this modern progress and rapid transportation, pushing space to one side with the sweep of a propeller, meant that the essence of distance were destroyed, it would be an arid gain. The only excuse for vanquishing horizons is that you can still find something different when you get to the other side; when eight-hour communication means nothing more than the distinction between breakfast and dinner, I shall vote to return to the caravel. But when one goes to Colombia, one goes to another world: a world of extremes and contradictions where mountains are higher and jungles thicker, summers colder and winters hotter, society more *raffiné* and peasants more medieval than in most parts of the globe. Time suffers a bewildering and exciting confusion, and prehistoric beasts are the contemporaries of polo ponies; an anthropologist could study almost the whole history of mankind without setting foot outside the frontier. The primitive is cheek by jowl with the highly civilized, jungles are

next door to cities, dugouts discharge their goods to six-wheel camions waiting on the bank.

A few months ago I dined on a breezy terrace off *pâté de foie gras*, sole meunière, and boned squab, accompanied by properly cold Traminer '37 and much stimulating conversation in four languages. Women in smart frocks, men in white dinner coats, discussed international politics with a kind of acute detachment, recalled incidents in New York and St. Moritz and Cannes, were funny and faintly malicious about the latest *potins*. It was all very normal—nothing more, in fact, than a very successful party—but what gave it a special flavor for me was the thought that three days before at the same hour I had been sitting on a bench outside a little 'dobe ranch house far up in the Sierra, making a supper from thick cocoa and cheese. On that evening the conversation had been mostly concerned with crops and the possibility of unearthing some worth-while treasure if one dug up that place in the old Indian site which the youngest daughter had dreamed about—and that, too, was a remarkably pleasant party.

There are plenty of contrasts that are even more dramatic, of course. For instance, one can wake up in the air-conditioned room of a modern hotel de luxe and before noon be at a camp in the center of almost unexplored jungle country inhabited by hostile bow-and-arrow Indians. I have done it. But the up-to-the-minute bungalow and the thatch-roofed *ranchito* are two established ways of life, co-existent yet a century apart, and to go from one to the other, by mule, pickup, banana railway and hydroplane is like traveling through a hundred years in forty-eight hours.

Colombia is, then, a land of extremes and contradictions. There are towering mountains marching in tremendous columns three abreast, some of them lifting snow-covered crests 18,000 feet in air; there are simmering jungles, swampy and fever haunted, where crocodiles slide into the shallow water and parrots scream from trees grotesque with orchids. The villas of Boston (new Barranquilla, not New England) and Chapinero, which go in for glass bricks and tricky bathrooms and libraries upholstered in white pigskin, are not much more than a good brassie shot from the secretive walls and barred windows of old

Spanish houses; and just beyond the stucco adaptations of French and Italian architecture one sees the towers of a colonial church and the earth-brown triangles of thatched roofs. Canoes charred from a single log paddle past the big steamers at the new Maritime Terminal; people on diminutive burros, riding high on the loads with their feet crossed scissorswise on the animals' necks, skirt the aviation fields, jogging along asphalt highways to market.

Colombia has one of the finest radium institutes in the world. There were colleges in Bogotá and Popayán when Williamsburg was undreamed of. The *Espedición Botánica* of a hundred and thirty years ago was a scientific undertaking of the first water that would be remarkable even today, and its modern offspring publishes a review that is one of the best of its kind in the world. There are archeological mysteries, impassive and secretive, that research has not penetrated, treasures in gold and emeralds still undiscovered. There are Indians of all kinds, from the proud Putumayans to the shy tribes who burn their villages and move back into the jungle when the canoes of the outlanders become too frequent. Savants and medicine men, statesmen and aborigines, cocktails and *chicha*, golf clubs and poisoned arrows, swimming pools and sacred lakes, Paris frocks, *ruanas* and breechclouts—they are all, in varying degrees, Colombia.

Thus it is impossible to begin this book with a neat definition, Telling All in a few well-chosen phrases. Colombia will not wrap up into a tidy parcel, tied together with a generalization, suitable for pigeonholing. When one attempts to gather all the ingredients together, the result is a bulky, irregular bundle, full of odd angles and rebellious bulges, that refuses to conform to an established formula or fit a standard container. But it is physically magnificent and variously interesting, and in it there is something for every taste—even that distressing one which, like that of the Englishmen who travel to see other Englishmen, yearns to find abroad the things that were left at home.

Perhaps, after all, I am prejudiced. It is only fair to warn you that the well-known author of a book about South America, dismissing Colombia in three pages after spending a few hours there between airplanes, wrote with supreme finality: "It is a singularly dull country."

CHAPTER II

The Lay of the Land

ALL COLOMBIA is divided in two parts: the mountainous and the flat.

The first is a leaf-shaped region, extending from the Eastern Cordillera to the sea, and from the Goajira Peninsula, 1,000 miles southeast of Miami, to Ecuador. Its 2,000-mile coastline slips away in a long descent, with the Isthmus of Panamá curving off to the west a little more than halfway down, like the spout of a teapot. The three parallel ranges of the Andes—the Western, Central, and Eastern Cordilleras—traverse its length, with summits sixteen, seventeen, and eighteen thousand feet in air; in the far north the independent group of the Sierra de Santa Marta rises nearly 19,000 feet in thirty miles, its peaks crowned with glaciers and its feet in the Caribbean.

It is in this territory, in the valleys hemmed in by towering mountains and on uplands sometimes half as high again as Mt. Washington, that the life of the country is centered; here are the farms and pastures, the cities and factories, the mines and oil fields; and here more than $98\frac{3}{4}$ per cent of the population lives, moves and has its being.

The remaining $1\frac{1}{4}$ per cent is scattered over the second part of Colombia, which comprises more than half the total area of the Republic. This is the Oriente, the immensity beyond the mountains to the east, whose far borders march with Venezuela, Brazil, Perú and Ecuador. It sweeps away endlessly in green and tawny wastes; the Andes drop into its level reaches as if into the sea. The upper and middle portions of this are the llanos—the plains; in the south it becomes soggy, impassable

jungle. The whole region is cut by innumerable rivers that find their way to the Orinoco and the Amazon. There are no towns worthy of the name, no roads beyond the new one that pushes out for sixty miles beyond the foot of the Cordillera to the Río Meta, almost no farms. Great herds of cattle, watched by hard-bitten *llaneros*, roam the Casanare and the Arauca; in the dry seasons they graze where they will, and in the rains, when the Oriente is semi-aquatic, they become almost amphibious. The nearest markets are weeks or months on the hoof away.

There are bright-eyed optimists who see in the llanos a boom land of the future, but if they are right, they are, to say the least, farsighted. The soil is poor, and transportation facilities nil; even if by irrigating, draining and fertilizing it were possible to grow substantial crops, and roads could be built to get at them, the cost would be monstrous, and by the time the produce reached its distant markets it would be as expensive as a collector's item. In time, bit by bit, something may be done, but at least for many decades the unwieldy Oriente seems destined to figure as quantity rather than quality in the national balance sheet.

The Goajira, pushing into the Caribbean between the Sierra Nevada and the Gulf of Venezuela, is also largely flat, and it, too, is a region to itself. Its sandy scrub and pasture shimmer in dry heat for eight months of the year; from September to December it rains (or should rain), and then the grass grows higher than a man, the brief rivers are full, and low-lying land is inundated. The Peninsula is inhabited by an imperfectly tamed aboriginal people, pastoral and still partly nomadic, whose index of wealth is in goats, cows and the big-headed, fleet and hardy horses called *agualillas*. Alone of all the political divisions of Colombia, the Goajira contributes nothing in taxes to the national exchequer; Uribia, its capital, is listed with the rider "does not rank as a municipality." Earliest of all Colombian territory to be discovered, the Goajira and its unvanquished Indian people bid fair to be among the last to enter the economic and social picture of the Republic.

Apart from the transandean plains and jungles, from the Goajira and bits of the Caribbean fringe, Colombia is an obstinately perpendicular kind of country. Crossing it from west to

east has all the dizzy variety of a roller coaster of the gods: sea level to 8,000 feet, down to 3,000, up to 10,000 or so, down to 800, up a mile and three quarters, down to a thousand feet—the whole in a little over two hundred air miles. Climate is a matter of altitude, and “each man holds in his hand the choice of living all his life in the perpetual spring of *tierra templada*, or in the perpetual sweat of *tierra caliente*, or in the incessant cold of *tierra fría*” as the old geographer put it.

Down in the gashes between the mountains, along the river courses, it is insufferably hot, and the coastal jungles belong in the steam-cooker class. But Bogotá is cool even at midday, and can be penetratingly cold, with the eiderdown-and-hot-water-bottle cold of northern April; and in Pasto, which sits very nearly on top of the Equator, woolen pullovers and a good top-coat are correct wear for the tropics. This variety in temperature puts the visitor up against a major problem; the mental effort that must be expended in a land of air travel to plan a wardrobe *ad hoc* which, although adequate for all occasions, will not cripple him (and particularly her) financially for life with excess baggage charges is about equal to that required to solve the question of international debts.

One can ignore the advice of Captain Charles Cochrane: “I would earnestly recommend every person traveling on horseback in this country to wear blue net pantaloons, a blue and white cotton jacket, long military boots, and a broad-brimmed straw hat,” though it is a pleasing picture and one I would enjoy seeing in practice by some of my more corpulent and Olympian acquaintances. And the small arsenal with which the early travelers provided themselves is quite unnecessary, for Colombia is a good deal safer than New York. But if you stay long enough and move about in reason, there will be a use for almost anything else you can think of.

On the other hand, if you root yourself in one place, all these sartorial difficulties are solved. There is practically no change of season in Colombia. Twice a year it is rainy, and these months are called winter; twice a year there is a dry period, and these are known as summers. “In summer” can be either February or July, according to context. This dependable sameness of temperature at given levels is no doubt convenient, and

Humboldt's picture of a man with a thermometer in his hand, choosing his own climate by ascending or descending, has a certain *outré* charm, but it has its disadvantages.

It seems that human beings need the organic gymnastics of adaptation to changing seasons, and that without these limbering exercises they become inelastic, react more slowly and are less vigorous and enterprising. Luis Enrique Osorio, in his *Geografía Económica*, after setting forth the drearier aspects of Colombian life (hookworm and malaria in the low countries, circulatory difficulties in the high ones that slow up mental and physical development) remarks cheerlessly: "Lack of travel molds the organism too much to the unvarying climate in which each person is born, and makes it more difficult for him to adapt himself if, once grown, he moves elsewhere. This organic rigidity reflects in a narrow mental outlook, so he is unable to comprehend other than momentary problems, or those which go beyond the limits of the parish."

I would not go all the way with Señor Osorio—the factors of health, diet, education, heredity and custom are too powerful—but there is no doubt that there is a great deal in this. The people who turn handsprings with grace and enthusiasm did not acquire their agility by sitting down. The question is carried to wider and more disquieting spheres by Luis López de Mesa, the eminent philosopher-sociologist who is at present Colombia's Minister of Foreign Affairs.

The South American continent, remarks Dr. López de Mesa, would seem to be fitted by size and climate to maintain a variety of bulky fauna in style and comfort. Yet it has come to have a disconcerting dearth of large mammals, while supporting "a prodigality of inferior life, aggressive and useless"—an observation with which anyone who has endured the creeping and flying pests of the low-lying regions, especially in the wet season, will be in hearty, not to say profane, agreement. Instead of elephants, it has tapirs; instead of lions, pumas; instead of camels, llamas; for tigers, jaguars; and for kangaroos, opossums.

"Still incipient studies lead to the conclusion that the higher animals degenerate in South American regions, sometimes because of the altitude, as in Bolivia and Perú, sometimes because of the grave diseases prevalent in the torrid lowlands

of the rest of the country. . . . It has been a struggle for centuries, for the livestock introduced in the Spanish colonial period deteriorated in the whole of Colombia, and, a still more disturbing fact, man has slowed up a little, not progressed much in stature nor in ambition to dominate."

I am no scientist, but it seems to me that here, too, the climate is being shouldered with a little too much blame. In the first place, a great deal of Colombia enjoys the perfect climate that is found at 3,000-foot elevations upwards in the torrid zone; most of the large cities and the greater part of the population are in places high enough to escape the pestilences of the jungles, and not so high that their energies are absorbed by the necessity of adaptation. Without presuming to explain the mystery of the diminishing wild animals, it is evident that all domestic stock deteriorates under certain circumstances; the flock that is never bred to other strains and which lives on short commons in the matter of pasture will not go on forever at the top of its form. There has been almost no immigration to Colombia in the last century, very little infusion of vigorous new blood, and the people, taking them all in all, have had to get along on fare that is hardly just what the eugenist would order. Then, too, that lassitude that is said to clog Colombian energy must be in some measure due to the chances of history, which until the beginning of the nineteen hundreds was divided into two violently opposed periods, both unnatural. The first was a stretch of two hundred and sixty successive years of almost absolute peace, during which the colony lived in static isolation as under a glass bell; the second was a century filled with bloody and unforgiving strife, explosive and exhausting. No wonder their energy has been a bit diluted.

Climate is, however, certainly the nigger in the woodpile when it comes to development, for it has made vast sections of the country useless. Or rather, it is one of twin niggers: the other is physical geography. The effect of the two combined is that Colombia, with an area nearly as great as that of France, Italy, the Netherlands, Belgium and the British Isles put together, supports an equivalent of about 6 per cent of their present population—and at that it is not really sparsely populated. At a casual glance, those ample pink spaces on the map

seem yawning for more people, but it is only appearances up to their old tricks.

It is not easy to calculate the amount of arable land in Colombia, and as far as I know it has not been officially attempted, but it is comparatively simple to estimate the regions that are *not* adapted to domesticity. Most of the llanos and the terrible southeastern jungles are out as far as cultivation is concerned, and they are more than half of all Colombia. The waterlogged country behind Barranquilla is out. The Catatumbo wilderness is out. The Chocó is out. And all the jumbled peaks that occupy so great a part of what is left when the jungles are subtracted are out. It is evident that although there are still immeasurable opportunities for development, it is not a wide-open land languishing fallow and expectant for the revivifying touch of the pioneer. Through four centuries the greater part of the accessible acreage has been patiently and painstakingly turned to usefulness, almost, in some sections, down to the last yard.

A word about jungles. There is nothing niggardly about the *selva*, but it usually refuses to be tamed. It is not that things will not grow, but that the wrong things grow too enthusiastically. Although they are, when left to themselves, so prolific of urgent life that it would seem a simple matter to substitute crops for creepers and reap the benefits of a perfervid fertility, for some reason this does not work in practice. The land which *au naturel* produced unquenchable vegetation becomes indifferent; quite apart from the incursions of rodents, insects, jaguars, monkeys and other un-co-operative fauna, the soil itself is disappointing once it is harnessed to the uses of man. The tropical forests of higher levels can be burnt off with profit; not so the matted growth of the lowlands.

Colombians are a hardy race. Nature here is not the meek handmaiden of mankind, plumply submissive in service. There are places where she is a placid, bourgeoisie goddess, given to comfortable mediocrity. But not in Colombia. Here she is extravagant and demanding, fantastically generous and stubbornly recalcitrant, a violent, magnificent creature to be courted like a lover and vanquished like an enemy. It is not just a question of tilling the earth—the regions that are cultivatable are rich and rewarding—but even more a question of communications.

CHAPTER III

Burros, Boats and Boeings

FOR CLOSE ON FOUR HUNDRED YEARS after the Conquistadores came to substitute the true Church and the rule of Spain for freedom and gold, travel in Colombia was limited to two kinds: river and mule trail. People got about, because they took days of difficult riding and weeks of poling upstream in their stride, but there was little interchange of goods, and each district lived to itself. In colonial days the sketchiness of communications was probably considered all to the good by the Madrid government, always alert to squash local enterprise and trade; the colonies existed for the mother country, and any attempt at economic independence was stepped on with firmness and dispatch. Even during the nineteenth century, when Spain could no longer spoke the wheels of progress, Colombia had its hands full with the long struggle for freedom and with the intermittent civil wars that ravaged her until 1902. Unfortunately, that was about all they were full of, for capital was conspicuously lacking, and road building in these arduous terrains takes skill and enterprise and daring—but most of all, money.

In 1913 Phanor Eder wrote, "In the matter of transportation, Colombia is in the Middle Ages." (The Eders knew from hard experience; they brought in all the machinery for the first sugar mill over the Cordillera and across the Valle by ox and mule—a little epic.) He might have said the same in 1920. I did not see it then, for at that time I was living happily halfway around the globe in a rather less well-equipped spot, without electric light, without running water, hours away from a doctor and

two days away from a fresh vegetable. But I can imagine it, and anyone past adolescence can give one plenty of travel anecdotes illustrative of that other-century yesterday.

I remember one day in Cali asking my hostess why her husband was driving down from Bogotá.

"Sixteen hours on the road!" I exclaimed. "Why didn't he fly?"

She smiled.

"Yes, sixteen hours seems long when you can do it in an hour and a quarter, doesn't it? But when I was taken to school in Bogotá, we were sixteen days on the road, and what with maids, *arrieros*, cooks, stirrup peons and so forth, there were twenty-four people in the party. When you went anywhere in those days, you traveled."

Ten thousand miles of highway have been built since 1925, with many more *en proyecto*; the "few hundred miles" of railway of 1912 are now grown to two thousand—still, however, more or less disconnected and, inexplicably, of three different gauges. In a little more than a decade communications have progressed a hundred years. The growing roads are a monument to Colombian energy, determination and realization of the fact that modern civilization is predicated on communications. They are also to some extent, like so many other improvements, a not unworthy monument to the loans that Colombia accepted in the days when exuberant North American capital was wooing South American governments, pleading to be taken in.

There is nothing petty or run-of-the-mill about the difficulties that confront the road builder in Colombia. Occasionally, very occasionally, there are bits of almost level land that are neither marshy nor precipice strewn, but except for the unique Cauca Valley, these are happy accidents in an obstreperous norm. The lowland selvas, a tangled growth of interlaced trees and creepers, stifling and poisonous, are inlaid with stagnant *caños*, lakes and swamps; the water reflects white and staring in the sun, so that from above—indubitably the most comfortable place from which to see it—the whole expanse has the appearance of a half-put-together jigsaw puzzle. There are reptiles great and small, from crocodiles to the slender deadly coral snake; there are tapirs and tigers and monkeys, ocelots and

wild pigs, and animals whose names mean nothing to American ears; worst of all, there are insects of every description, all of which bite, some painfully and some fatally. And when it rains, much of what was lent to the land is taken back by the rising waters.

This is the terrain that separates the cities of the coast from the interior, and it has not yet been conquered. There is still no way of getting by land from the interior to the Atlantic. Barranquilla, at the mouth of the Magdalena, is a flourishing, expanding port, but it has almost no hinterland of its own; Cartagena has the cattle lands of Bolívar and Santa Marta has the banana zone, but all are isolated from the main body of the country. However, it is in the mountainous interior that the mass of the people live, and for that reason it is not the jungles but the mountains, the triple grandeur of the Andes, that is the constant factor in Colombian economy, history and customs. Except in the Oriente and the selvas, you cannot stand anywhere in the length and breadth of the land and not see them, insistent and superb. They hold the wealth in good earth and rich minerals, but they stand squarely across the way of communications, defying man to pass—and some of them are four miles high. There are nearly 200,000 square miles of mountains, and it is here that men have accepted the challenge, pushing their roads along dizzy abysses, snaking them over passes 10,000 feet or more high, linking town to town and village to village in an ever-growing network. Some of them are excellent, some are hair raising (the one to San Francisco from Pasto, for instance, is the ultimate in fearsomeness, the daring of its builders being only equaled by that of the people who travel it), most of them are badly surfaced, but they are traced extremely well. I have never seen one that was not superlatively graded.

There is plenty of traffic on the new highways. Big trucks lumber heavy with freight that once went on four feet, cars sweep easily where ten, five, three years ago the straining mules labored twenty miles between daybreak and dusk. Small boys in remote villages whose fathers reckoned distances in riding time say, "It's about two hours if you go at sixty." There are quantities of taxis, all new, all American, all ready to go anywhere, any time, and the rates are more moderate than might be

expected. The "choferes" will cheerfully contract to take you to any town in the whole country that can be reached on wheels, and some that cannot, but they live by the hour, and any trip, no matter how brief, invariably begins with a pause for gasoline nicely calculated to the last gill for the run. I have never been stalled in a Colombian taxi, but on the other hand I have never changed my route or destination once embarked.

Horsepower has not banished pony, mule and burro power, of course, and wheels have not supplanted hooves. The roads are trunk roads; on either side the trails wander down to meet and cross them. And if Cundinamarca and Antioquia are laced with highways and thick with automobiles, the lonely Intendencias of the Oriente have no traffic problems. Amazonas, according to the last available figures, shows a total of six vehicles: five government trucks and one private automobile; Vichada, in the square between the Meta, the Guaviare and the Orinoco, boasts exactly eight wheels in its 103,000 square kilometers—i.e., two donkey carts and two bicycles, or one wheel for every 1,725 inhabitants. But the two thousand inhabitants of Puerto Carreño, a thousand kilometers of desolate river from the nearest town, do not miss the cars; here it is canoes that count, and the motors that matter are outboards.

It is odd to think that less than thirty years ago no one could foresee the most far-reaching development of all: commercial aviation. Yet Colombia's Scadta, started in 1919 by some young Germans in search of the living their own country could not give them, was the first commercial air line in the world.

The venture was organized on a shoestring about the thickness of the human hair, and although a few farseeing Colombians, most from Barranquilla, supported the daring experiment, the general attitude was expressed in the two-edged phrase "No queremos ver volar nuestros dineros"—"We don't want to see our money fly." There was a poem dear to my childhood, a very long exposé of the thorny path of human progress, which began: "Said the little eohippus, I am going to be a horse, And on my middle fingernails I'll run my earthly course." I do not remember the words of the rest of the verse, which was about the derisive incredulity of the other prehistoric beasts, but the last line ran: "Why, it's against the course of nature! and they

all sat back and laughed." The Scadta was in the position of the eohippus.

In 1920 an Austro-Czech, who had lived in Colombia before the World War and who had taken part in a scientific expedition to the Oriente, turned up in Barranquilla. His name was Peter Paul von Bauer, and providentially for the infant air line, he had two things that rarely go together: faith and \$100,000. The hundred thousand was his share of the family estate, and represented every cent he had in the world, but such was his enthusiasm for the newfangled aerial basket that he promptly placed in it all the eggs at his disposal. He bought up the foundling shares of the company and the Scadta began to work in earnest. Bauer (who had become a Colombian citizen) even dreamed an international service that would link North and South America, and when they all sat back and laughed, he proved his point with a flight by way of Central America—an amazing feat in 1925. The United States watched with vivid interest; Scadta did not get its bases, but in 1929 Pan American Airways started their flights.

At this point the inevitable struggle began. Pan American, bent on a vast intercontinental system far beyond the reach of a small company, had secured the necessary facilities on the coast of Colombia, but sought to tie up the international service with the domestic one in the interior. Scadta, not unnaturally, wanted to keep anyone else off its preserves, and was probably not without a tit-for-tat obstructionism. It was a deadlock, but there are more ways of killing a cat than by hitting it over the head with a propeller blade.

Scadta, though unsubsidized, was in the black by virtue of strict economy and a fruitful mail contract. But aviation is the least static of industries; today's last word in modernity is tomorrow's dodo, and it is not by narrow margins of profit that air services are improved and expanded. In 1931 the angel, Bauer, who was president and general manager of the company, sold out his stock to Pan American Airways, reportedly for \$750,000, and Scadta became 83 per cent American. The agreement was negotiated "with the knowledge of interested Washington officials"—but not with that of officials in Bogotá. A number of excellent reasons prompted the contracting parties

to keep it in the family—a tight little group that did not include the Scadta personnel; apart from the question of salaries and discounts, a rather chill breeze was blowing in Colombia at that time on foreign monopolies and concessions, and national pride in the trail-blazing air line was strong.

The reckless experiment had turned into a solid business proposition, and aviation in Colombia took on new scope and vigor. In 1920 the little Junker hydroplanes carried twelve courageous paying passengers and 1,780 pounds of freight. In 1939, the Company carried 54,621 passengers and nearly a million pounds of freight. It is difficult to convey the enormous effect on the country of this sudden solution of century-old problems. It was not just an improvement on existing systems: it was a revolutionary innovation. If printing, gunpowder, and the internal combustion engine are the three discoveries that have molded the world since the dark ages, it is the last of these that has altered Colombia in a generation.

Two years ago the Colombian government decided it would be advisable to reorganize the air lines into a national rather than a private company, merging with the Scadta the smaller Saco line. At this point the awkward fact emerged that Panair held all but 17 per cent of the shares, that the Sociedad Colombo-Alemana de Transportes Aéreos was, and had been for years, a North American-owned concern. The upshot of much consultation has been the establishment of a new company, the Aerovías Nacionales de Colombia, called more briefly, Avianca. The Colombian government has an option on 59 per cent of the shares of the reorganized company, the remaining 41 per cent being held by Pan American Airways. It is stipulated in the agreement that foreign employees are to be replaced by Colombians; since this clause contains no time limit, it conveniently provided for mass dismissal of the Germans while permitting Panair men to fill the berths and carry on for as long as may be considered necessary. Eighty-four Germans—pilots, ground men, dispatchers, and so on—were turned out in one fell swoop early in June 1940. The move was not unforeseen, except in the blitz quality of its execution, but flying in the Andes—day-in-day-out commercial schedules averaging 6,500 miles a day, a hundred and twenty-odd flights a week—is not

a simple matter to take over wholesale. Many of the ousted Scadta personnel had been in the service for anything from three to twenty years; the Colombian public (repeat a miracle and make a commonplace) had come to take clockwork regularity for granted. The customer, notoriously indifferent to the producer's headaches, reasons in one tense only: the present; Avianca, busy learning the ropes, increasing its equipment, and improving ground facilities, has come in for a good deal of peevish comment.

And yet, with all our quick-learned exigencies about timetables and mail dates, we are still near enough to the time when aviation was a foolhardy dream to have kept some of the wonder. "Think," we say impressedly, "you can leave New York in the afternoon and be in Los Angeles by morning. Instead of three days by train!" In Colombia, even without fishing for comparisons in far-off times, the contrasts are infinitely more dramatic. Medellín to Barranquilla is a two-hour flight any day in the week, instead of five or six days by rail, car, and boat; Cúcuta to Bucaramanga is an hour, flying at 13,000 feet through a breath-taking pass, instead of five arduous days in the saddle. Most striking of all, it is no longer necessary, in order to reach the capital from the Caribbean, to take the long river route (boat to Honda, rail around the rapids, more boat, and finally the trail or railway from Girardot to the plateau); it can be flown in two hours and forty minutes.

The people who went to Colombia in the long-ago days before 1925 or so have a slight and conscious edge on those pampered children of decadence who arrived too late to do their necessary traveling in the old way. These rugged souls do not, of course, love mule trails and paddle boats for their own sake; they do not go out into the Sierras and the llanos to keep up the rock-bound tradition. They drive comfortable sedans and are rather snippy about hotel accommodation, even as you and I. But when they came to Bogotá, they came up the Magdalena, and they say in the tone of one who knows the answer and deploras it in advance, "How did you come, by river or by plane?"—adding immediately, "Of course, you can't really know the country if you haven't traveled by the river. I remember when . . ."

I learned to defend myself by remarking, perhaps with more spirit than truth, that this is like saying one can never know the United States unless one has traveled by covered wagon, and that it is possible to know a country even if one did not know it when. If this failed, there was a trump card to play with false casualness. "Of course, I came in by the back door," I would say with modest pride, "by way of the Catatumbo." This was very effective, if a little unfair, since although the Catatumbo jungles were unpenetrated until three years ago, and the Indians who live in them are hostile enough for the most captious taste, I had gone through them with particular pleasure and considerable comfort.

The journey from Barranquilla to Bogotá took as long as inscrutable Providence and the state of the channel decreed. Ideally, it meant a week, but as with all ideals, man's reach considerably exceeded his grasp, and if the water were low, it might be four weeks, or six. The fuel was wood, which meant frequent stops each day at blistering points along the way, and after the first hundred miles or less, the boats did not risk travel at night, but tied up to the bank where hordes of famished mosquitoes waited impatiently. Until a few years ago, passengers provided themselves with sheets and a blanket, a mosquito net, abundant tinned foods, a quart bottle of citronella, and a large supply of reading matter; the more experienced and less self-conscious added a gauze head net for evening wear, a supply of ice, and as many bottled drinks to cheer and possibly inebriate as they believed necessary.

The boats are now well equipped and much better kept, but the sandbanks and submerged logs still lie in wait, as do the insects. The editors of the *Stuffed Owl*, that priceless collection of distinguished tripe, quote a moving stanza from Grainger:

Mosquitoes, sandflies seek the sheltered roof,
And with fell rage the stranger-guest assail,
Nor spare the sportive child; from their retreats
Cockroaches crawl displeasingly abroad.

The Reverend Grainger must have been a traveler on the Magdalena.

It is somehow consoling to realize that it costs a great deal

less to travel now than it did a hundred years ago; those simple modes of conveyance were remarkably expensive. It is nice, when you fork out sixty lovely smackers for an airplane ticket and anxiously watch the needle swing around on the luggage scale—on which the suitcases that seemed so frail and inadequate at home have assumed the air of wardrobe trunks—to think that a single gentleman of quality used to spend \$1,000 to reach Bogotá from the coast. The pleasures of managing something approaching an expedition and those of sleeping on banks where crocodiles and stray tapirs enlivened the mosquito-haunted night, of labor difficulties and bad weather, were included in the price.

And yet the long days moving quietly upstream, the green banks and villages, the star-filled nights and, above all, the sunsets must have compensated for a great deal. Something has been lost, now that towns that were as distant in time as Mexico City from Toronto can be reached before breakfast, and leagues of slow discovery are telescoped to convenience. Away from the river, the rough tracks coiled through fertile valleys and towering forests. Riding them was not all roses and romance; inns were primitive; winter might mean drenching rains and girth-high mud; the clammy fog of the passes could reach into the marrow of one's bones. But winter is not forever. There were also singing days of summer; mornings when the air was clear and chilly-sweet as a flute; the indescribable goodness of riding in sunshine; the infinite content of healthy tiredness at the end of a long day in the open. "There's night and day, brother, both good things; sun and moon and stars, brother, all sweet things; there's likewise a wind on the heath."

Perhaps the old residents are right. I am glad I had some of the scrambling trails, saw some of the breathless panoramas between the ears of a mule, and that one day I will do these things again.

CHAPTER IV

Colombians

WHEN SOMEONE TURNS AROUND between Martinis and asks brightly, "Tell me, what are the Colombians like?" he creates a mild problem. Should one be adequate and take a chance on holding the listener's attention to one subject a quarter of an hour—always a reckless gamble—or just pare truth to the bone and answer "Charming"?

Heaven knows it is hard enough to say, in the time the social law allows, what an Englishman is like, or a Swede, or an Italian, unless blessed with the happy certainty of the uninformed. But it is child's play compared to describing a Colombian, if by that is meant a citizen of the Republic of Colombia. Within those far-flung borders there are people of every kind, color and degree of civilization, from sophisticates to savages, all equal under the law, though not, of course, equally important. It is impossible to establish a type by mixing the whole population and dividing the result by nine million, because they don't mix; you cannot make a composite picture by adding a Motilone Indian to a professor of political economy.

In the widest sense of the word, a Colombian may be any one of several extremes. He may be tall and blond and blue eyed, or small and brown and Asiatic looking. Or he may be black. He may wear the clothes of Savile Row and boots by Yapp, or he may be shod in *alpargatas*, or even favor that least common denominator, the loincloth. He may play polo and be plus four at golf, or he may hunt jaguars with a spear. More typically, he may speak, in addition to his own Castilian, the French of Paris and the English of Oxford; quote Dante in the

original; delight and faintly shame you with an easy erudition as unpretentious as it is profound.

The fierce Caribs, whom other tribes from sad experience decided were descended from a tiger, used to say superbly: "Ana cariná rôte"—"Only we are people." In Colombia, as elsewhere in Latin America, the upper and middle classes are people: the *gente*. They are not, general opinion to the contrary, particularly wealthy, and can be distinctly pinched, but they control the nation. It seems rather obvious to emphasize that the Indians of the Oriente have less influence on national life than our own Apaches—though they have felt the heavy hand of the civilizer less—but perhaps it is well to repeat it, because the Indians and the peasants get most of the publicity. There is nothing particularly picturesque about an eminent lawyer or a banker or a businessman, nothing specially romantic about an insurance broker or an import-and-export merchant. They are the people who count, but we are insurance brokers and merchants ourselves. They do not appease "the unquiet curiosity of the things that cannot be known," which Pascal said was the principal ailment of man. People who spend their lives in a kind of paradise of the expected, a steam-packed, vitamin-measured, predigested, handy-container world, convenient (exact instructions for living on wrapper) and according to formula, have a hankering for things new and strange.

This is unfortunate, perhaps, especially from the point of view of the Colombians, who are divided between amusement and exasperation, but it is very natural. "Más sabor han de tener las cosas ocultas que las destapadas," says Germán Arciniegas—which freely translated means that a deep-dish pie is more exciting than an open tart. When you talk to a professor or a dry goods merchant, the differences are only of character and outlook, but when you talk to a peasant high up in the Andes, or to a Huitoto of the Putumayo, you look at other centuries and touch history with your hand.

To go back to the man who wanted to know what Colombians are like. Ideally, one should reply, "What do you mean, Colombians?" and he would answer, "I mean the *gente*." Here there is solid ground under one's feet, for in spite of the enormous regional differences—it's that geography again—and the

usual superficial ones that come from varying resources and standards of living, they have a great many common traits. On this basis it is possible to block in a drawing of a Colombian, although it must be left a sketch; once one comes to the details of a finished portrait, it must be decided whether the subject is an Antioqueño, a Bogotano or a native of some other district of the country.

The Colombians are generous, proud and sensitive; they love ideas and respect those who use them, and enjoy what López de Mesa calls "a spiritual agility"; they have a keen and very adult sense of humor, a tendency to chips on the shoulder, an innate and effortless courtesy, and an enviable level of culture. Their family feeling is strong, and so is their group and regional solidarity, but they are intensely independent, individual as are the French, only to a greater degree—a personally attractive trait that has its social drawbacks. They are loyal friends and hearty enemies, and in both cases express themselves with indiscriminating vigor. Much given to discussion—which they do extremely well—and incurably devoted to politics, they write elegantly and often, and the columns of the newspapers are brilliant with dissertation, attack and defense.

Taken by and large, the Colombian mentality is more philosophical than technical. The concrete is a springboard from which to sail into the abstract. The conversation may start prosaically enough with dog breeding or the production of rice in the llanos, but almost inevitably it slides into general considerations that often have a somewhat paragraphic style. Extremely analytical, they exercise this bent upon themselves, not always to their advantage; the habit of taking things to pieces to see what makes them work is apt to end in a collection of carefully identified parts that are no good to anyone. And this habit of mind made them vulnerable, as a Colombian friend explained to me with amiable detachment.

"For years," he said, "we have been troubled with that popular affliction, the inferiority complex. We had it badly, though it is on the way out now. It was partly due to starting so late in the mechanical development that passes nowadays for civilization—other people measured us with the yardstick of material progress, and found us hopelessly backward. We

didn't like it, we weren't entirely convinced, but it made a dent in us just the same.

"We have never been much impressed with the Anglo-Saxon doctrine of the Divine Right of Blondes—did you ever stop to think that 'Aryanism' is just a reflection, distorted and a little larger than life, of that creed?—but we were impressed by the foreigners who came here. It was hard to get into the interior of Colombia in those days; the few people who came did so for special reasons; they were an exceptional lot, who would have been outstanding anywhere.

"We only started to develop after 1902, and we were in a bad way when we began: our man power exhausted, our economy shot to pieces. Foreigners came in and did the things we had neither the men, the money or the training to do ourselves. They built and operated railways and docks and public services, they had concessions for gold and platinum and pearls, they worked the emerald mines. They lent us money. Our boys had to go abroad for scientific training, and when they came back they found it hard to know where to use it.

"Forty years isn't much—but it has been a lot to us. We have grown up. That supersensitive complex of ours is dying a natural death, now that the things that nourished it are going. It has been helped along the downward path by the fact that once Colombia dawned on the world, and our needs increased, and lately when we seemed a promising haven, we got an influx of all kinds of newcomers, and while some were like those first handpicked ones, others were only poor devils in search of a job. We got a cross-section of other nations, not just a slice off the top. It did us good."

Certainly the Colombians, though they have an understandable aversion to outside criticism, are not afraid to air their faults themselves. They dissect themselves in print with trenchant candor and a kind of gloomy gusto. The daily papers are full of hard-hitting comments on the things that need prodding, and they are quite as outspoken as those of St. Louis and Detroit and Los Angeles. But as another Bogotano put it: "Colombians are slightly allergic to foreign opinion, and unfortunately, foreign opinion is often half-baked."

Because the Latin habit of speech leans to a florid style that

we have abandoned (but how we wallowed in it fifty years ago!), we are obstinately convinced that all peoples of that ilk are impulsive, exaggerated and ruled by passion. Nothing could be more false. The Latin is a remarkably hard-headed, logical, reasoning animal, and although his affections are strong, he has little use for trailing veils of sentimentality. Our own system is to drape too harsh realities in rosy folds of altruism, duty, reluctant obligation and the like, and it annoys and rather shocks us to see the wrappings removed. But the Latin takes his facts of life straight. We have had plenty of occasion to remark this, often with some irritation; yet in spite of everything, we cling to our preconceptions, like the English who know by the calendar that it is summer and wear chiffon frocks to those freezing garden parties that call for furs.

The Colombian is a Spaniard, more or less tinged with Indian. This is less simple than it sounds. The Spanish Peninsula absorbed something from many races during the two and a half millenniums between the first Phoenician settlements and the discovery of the New World. Practically everyone invaded Spain at one time or another, and many of them dug themselves in to stay. The blond Visigoths ruled for two centuries; the Moors were there, all told, for seven hundred and eighty years, five hundred of them in almost complete power. Then too, the conquered and assimilated tribes of the New Realm were anything but homogeneous. No wonder the widely varying results of this unlikely mixture have proved complex and somewhat inflammable, capable of heroism, violence, idealism, cruelty, self-abnegation, flamboyance and cold practicality in a bewildering and often contemporaneous assortment.

Thus, although the Colombians are clearheaded and skeptical to the point of cynicism, much of their troubled history has been caused by a crusading political idealism. For nearly a century (from the outbreak of the struggle for Independence to the end of the Conservative-Liberal civil war of the Thousand Days, in 1902) passionate theorists rode their principles roughshod against their erring but equally bigoted opponents, each anxious to "prove their doctrine orthodox by apostolic blows and knocks," preferring death to the defeat of their own personal truth. There is nothing peculiar in the decades of endemic

unrest, which were shared by every other country south of the Río Grande; what is unusual—beyond the curiously disinterested motives of the contenders, as pugnacious, dogmatic, shortsighted and high-minded a lot of patriots as could well be imagined—is the fact that it stopped as if the current had been turned off at the beginning of the twentieth century.

Another slightly surprising aspect of Colombian character is their basic moderation, or rather in their own word, equilibrium, in matters of international relations. Fanatics for so long in domestic politics, they keep a remarkably even keel in foreign affairs, even when their sympathies are engaged. It is significant that Colombia is one of the three South American countries most friendly to the United States, although she has the most to forgive; that she resisted all pressure to stampede her into belligerency in the last World War; that she has given hospitality impartially to Spanish communists and Spanish nationalists, Jews, Syrians, Germans, Italians and assorted refugees, requiring only that they behave themselves. The surcharged and superheated atmosphere in which we pass so much of our time strikes the Colombian visitor as extraordinary.

It must be the same fundamental balance that made their love of Men on Horseback stop short of making the admired equestrianism permanent and official, and that has saved them from excesses other countries have not escaped. Colombia has never had a president assassinated in office—an absolutely unique record in American republics, including our own; she has never had a dictator (four men tried it, not very determinedly, and failed: Bolívar, Mosquera, Melo and Reyes); her army has never revolted against constituted authority; and for nearly forty years she has been free of the plague of risings, *coups d'état* and general yeastiness that still afflicts her neighbors far and near. Slavery was abolished forty years before the thirteenth amendment was passed in the United States. Elective representation, universal citizenship, and equality under the law are matters of fact as well as theory. There is the same freedom of opinion that we are inclined to imagine bears the seal of the United States Patent Office, and it has abundant exercise.

In other words, Colombia is democratic—very nearly the only one of the Latin American countries that can live up to

the oft-repeated statements about common devotion to democratic ideals and forms of government with which Pan-American conferences are wreathed. Colombian democracy, indeed, has had the passionate, marrow-deep intransigence of Moslem fanaticism; for long decades the rival interpreters of the true faith were like Shiites and Sunnites battling to the death for a dogma. True, there is no economic or cultural equality between the predominantly European upper class and the negroid or heavily mestizo proletariat in Colombia. There is, however, a kind of free-and-easiness, an absence of social taboos, that would be regarded with the greatest suspicion in Kentucky. Kirkpatrick, who knows both South America and Spain as few can hope to do, says: "Socially, Spain, touched by the East, is the most democratic country in Europe, and notwithstanding the wide gap between the very rich and the very poor in some parts, Hispanic America is still fundamentally Spanish."

It is a little difficult to isolate for inspection instances of what is, after all, an unconscious mental habit, an atmosphere, the elusive thing the French call "*climat*." Colombians are, for instance, quite without the kind of snobbery that until the last war caused middle-class English families to turn in haughty distaste from anything that bore the damning label "trade," balk slightly at people in banks—with the possible exception of the Governor of the Bank of England—and feel there was something faintly regrettable about a solicitor. (Barristers were quite all right, of course.) To this unexactingness in choice of *métier* is added a large tolerance in matters of color, and a perfect willingness to accept anyone who can make the grade, regardless of his origins, provided (this is essential) he is personally pleasant.

I have already mentioned manners, which run on lines of ceremonious gentility regardless of caste. You address a *campe-sino* in the polished numbers of one Chesterfield to another, and are replied to in kind. Courtesy breeds courtesy: I have gone to the "assassins' quarter" above Bogotá to take photographs and been treated with the polite urbanity of the Vere de Veres. It is said that a night visit might mean a hold-up or a slit throat; it seems hard to believe of such courtly people, but I am sure it would be done with a certain air.

In a caste sense, there is no aristocracy in Colombia. There is only a middle class (upper and lower) and a proletariat. As far as externals go, one can make a fairly exact picture of a Colombian of the *haute bourgeoisie* that would apply to eighty per cent of the *gente distinguida* in any large city of the Republic.

This composite Colombian was educated—with distinction—in one of the Church colleges, following this with several years of travel and study abroad. He has a business, conducted (in a bare unlovely office that is comfortlessly utilitarian) at a moderate tempo—*allegro ma non troppo*. He is married, and the father of a numerous family. He lives in a modern stucco villa (living room, dining room, four or five bedrooms, perhaps a library) with a small garden and an attached garage for his American car. He keeps four servants, who consider themselves part of the family on ten pesos each a month. He belongs to the country club and to one or two in town, where he spends a generous part of his leisure time; he knows all his fellow members and is related to half of them.

Somewhere he has a *cafetal* or an *hacienda*, with an old, unpretentious house on it. He is thinking of building a week-end bungalow, down the mountain where it's warmer, or up where it's cooler, in order that he can have a change of climate if not of season. In Barranquilla he wears white linen and dines at eight; in Bogotá he wears dark clothes and dines at nine or ten; in Cúcuta he gets up at six and is in his office shortly after seven. He drinks whisky to the exclusion of other liquors. He is not a fanatic about sport, but enjoys a game of polo. He is one of the élite, and his income is \$6,000 a year. Since money is not terribly important, he does not strain himself to make more; it is nice to live well, but foolish to keep one's nose everlastingly to the grindstone to live better. There are so many agreeable things that cannot be bought; an easy pleasure in friendly meetings, conversation for the fun of it, the club and café, even that most trying of experiences, the family gathering. It is not that money is unimportant, but that beyond a certain point it costs more than it's worth. It is useless as a social door-opener, and in any case he needs no golden jemmy, because he "belongs."

Whatever the defects of a hard-cast social order may be, it does eliminate some unattractive features of more fluid systems: undue respect for, and classification by, material riches; the uneasy ostentation of those who have arrived at new, and it may be impermanent, heights; false shame of those in lower niches of the scale; the Olympianism of the insecurely consequential.

It has been said—frequently by their own writers—that Colombians have a habit of verbal exaggeration, of suave and mellifluous expressions so habitual that they are practically a reflex, of lush phrases denoting improbable regard, pleasure and general hallelujah unsupported by fact. That they are too damn' polite to be sincere, in other words.

There is something in this, but not too much. We have a good many elegant ready-made euphemisms ourselves. We do not leave our hostess with a brief, sterling: "Good night. Frightful bore—and really, no wine is better than Sacramento Sauterne," or, "It's been a washout of a week end; can't think why you asked us." We do not shake the hand of a new acquaintance and say with clear-eyed candor, "Well, anyhow we'll never have to see each other again." No, we had a *marvellous* time and it was perfect and how darling and/or swell it was of you to ask us and we're *delighted* to have met you.

It is really a question of exchange. Language in Latin America is not false coin, it is merely inflated, with adjectives at a slight discount, so that it takes, say, two Colombian superlatives to one Anglo-Saxon positive. If the forms and patterns of courtesy are rather elaborate, they are certainly no more so than they were in pre-war Europe. In any case, even should the visitor find them irksome, he had better follow them with good grace. Neglect will not be counted unto him for righteousness, but for ill breeding. It will help him if he imagines himself somewhere in the Eastern states a generation or two ago; usages that seemed unfamiliar will take on quite a homey air.

If this time lag is kept in mind, one realizes that many customs and habits of mind that are strange to us (though not, of course, to a southern European) would be entirely natural to our parents or grandparents. The position of women, for instance. Keep grandma in mind, and you will find most Colombian women under fifty quite emancipated. In that

remote, archaic period about fifty years ago, "nice" women did not go in for careers or independence. Higher education was for men, and although a lady was expected to converse with distinction (and discretion), she acquired the necessary equipment mostly by indirect oral methods. Daughters were taught that a girl's reputation—her All—was about as sturdy as a glass bubble in a boiler factory; this fragile essential was guarded by iron-sheathed conventions apparently based on the conviction that misbehavior was only a matter of opportunity. However, while moderns offer thanks for being born at a later date, they might remember that grandmother, her world bounded by family, home, friends and charity, probably wielded quite as much influence in her quiet way as does her granddaughter. Also, that although she limited sports to a little genteel croquet, she was able to bear and bring up eight or ten children, and if necessary to help drive a covered wagon and build a sod house.

I find there is very little left to say about women in Colombia, except that like everywhere else, there are all kinds. I can think of a biologist, a top-flight journalist, a girl who when last heard of was headed for the Orinoco in a canoe—but they are exceptional. The average Colombian woman, even if she looks like the Rue de Rivoli and lives in an all-electric slab-wood and chromium house, is first, last and all the time a wife and mother.

On rereading this chapter, I realize that there is no mention of one thing that is generally considered a unique and distinguishing element in South American, and therefore Colombian, psychology—a dynamic and aggressive gallantry. According to popular belief, all our Latin brothers are indiscriminately and indefatigably amorous, sultry in thought and predatory in action. No woman is safe with them for a moment. Many a girl, believing these things implicitly, has taken a cruise with the most disappointing results.

Undoubtedly, climate, temperament, the tradition of male prowess and an insufficient immunization by exposure all contribute to the frank sensuality of the average Latin. Sex is as natural, and as insistent, as hunger—hunger that is not blunted by the continual presence of potential dinners. The North American lives in a world of women; they are in the offices, on the street, at restaurants and clubs; they fill every bus and

train; they are on the flying field and in the smoking car. The only place in which he is safe from them is the men's locker room. Now caviar once in a way is stimulating, but caviar three times a day, caviar on every table, caviar in cafeterias and nesting in the Automat, caviar on hot dog stands and in the lunch pail, would soon lose its piquant charm. The Colombians, fortunately or unfortunately, have still something of the unjaded reaction I once remarked in a Victorian novel, in which the hero was thrown into a state of pleasurable agitation by the sight of a young lady's ankle.

The point to remember is that while the average Colombian may be somewhat more combustible than the average American or Britisher, he does not combust entirely spontaneously. He may, however, get his stop and go signals mixed. Although he knows—as it were academically—that North American women have almost unlimited freedom, the outward and visible signs of this liberty are often unfamiliar to him; its more exuberant forms can lead to the kind of misunderstanding that leaves both parties feeling injured. A woman alone, even encumbered with beauty such as burned the topless towers of Ilium, can travel the length and breadth of the country without fear of offense by word or gesture. But bright young things with a habit of sailing close to the wind would do well to drop off a point or two, remembering that at a conservative estimate, what might be called the Latin outlook is shared (or intensified) by about nineteen hundred million people in the world.

Colombians have one other trait in common that is singularly pleasant: they are quite without pretentiousness. Forms and phrases may wreath everyday behavior in arabesques of courtesy, but as a people they are both too intelligent and too alert to the ridiculous for self-importance, whatever their position or attainments. There may be those who nurse an intimate conviction that they are among the nobler of God's works, but if so they keep the opinion strictly to themselves. Affectation in general, and that of personal importance in particular, gets short shrift from the sardonic Colombians, who can be very funny, but not particularly kind, about suggestions of pomposity.

Perhaps the whole story could be put in one phrase: the Co-

Colombians are good company. They are mentally stimulating; they suffer fools sadly, and can destroy with barbed humor better than most people by frontal attack—the person who falls foul of Colombian society can learn all there is to know of “the terror and power of laughter”; they are not promiscuously hail fellow well met, though their code teaches them to speak you fair. But they are also limitlessly kind, and once they have decided to take you in, it is with a warmhearted completeness which means that ever after you have a stake of friendship between the llanos and the sea.

CHAPTER V

The Other Half

GOVERNMENT BY THE PEOPLE does not necessarily mean government by all the people. Colombian democracy has been damned for an empty phrase because of the absence of anything approaching a common level of economic or cultural well-being, but we do not have to look far afield to see that a working democracy can get along very nicely without it. ("The drawback to equality is that we only want it with our superiors.") However, although the distance between a campesino and an *hacendado* in Colombia may be less than that between a share-cropper and a corporation executive here, the proportion of the underprivileged to the comfortably well off is much greater. Poor boys can, and do, become Presidents, but a large part of the population never thinks beyond the minutiae of survival.

Fifty per cent of the laboring class—all of mixed blood—can neither read nor write. Many of them live on the ragged edge of want; not, perhaps, in misery, since the climate and the generous soil are kind to the poor, but totally without those physical comforts to which we as a nation attach such importance. The luxuries that in a generation or two have become necessities to us are to them beyond the wildest dreams of a *guarapo*-oiled Saturday night. A laborer who is paid \$1.25 a day, seven days for six, is sitting pretty; agricultural workers, who receive a piece of ground to cultivate for themselves, make from sixty centavos to a peso, and women may earn half that. The typical workman's family in Bogotá (parents and three children) impaled on a statistical pin by government investigations, was found to spend \$37 a month all told, equal to \$21

of our money. This is what they spent it on, reckoned in dollars:

They laid out \$3.42 on rent, light and water for their single room. A dollar went for a hundred pounds or so of charcoal, another dollar for newspapers, \$2.10 for drinks and tobacco, \$1.14 for clothes. The rest—all of \$11.75—was expended almost entirely for food. Surprising though it may seem, they did not starve. They bought 23 pounds of meat, 19 pounds of sugar (mostly *panela*, the brown bricks that taste of molasses), 100 pounds of potatoes, 6½ pounds of chocolate, 52 pounds of bread and cereals, 15 bottles of milk, 16 eggs, 4½ pounds of fats. They also purchased 4½ pounds of soap, for they wash their clothes assiduously, although they apparently never mend them.

The farm laborer, who devotes one day a week to his own plot, one (Sunday) to a trip to the nearest market, and one to recuperation from the exhausting joys of the Sabbath, makes little enough in actual cash. His chief purchases are meat, *panela* and *miel* (molasses). The last two serve principally for making *chicha* and *aguardiente*, the crude liquors with which he and his defeat fatigue, illness and the infinite weariness of a life without horizons. Most of the family provender comes from the garden: *yuca*, *arracacha*, maize, plantain and so forth. His house, such as it is, costs him nothing; and he has no expenses for light, gas, heat and water, because for him these services are nonexistent.

Contrary to general opinion, Colombia is not parceled out in vast estates that cover all the available arable land and exclude the possibility of small holdings. There are innumerable modest proprietors who farm anything from one to twenty acres or more. Caldas, the chief coffee-producing department, is predominantly small farms, as are Antioquia and Santander, and in the Santa Marta banana zone the Fruit Company buys from between six and seven hundred different growers. In some places the amount each husbandman owns seems impossibly small; between Bogotá and Tunja there are open valleys that look like suburban developments, checkerboards of minute "farms" with the brown cubes of the ranchitos standing on them like pieces in some Brobdinagian game. On the other hand, the barefoot *carrielón* of the Antioquian hills may have enough ready cash in his hide pouch on market day to buy an attractive

colonial residence standing in its own grounds in Westchester, with enough left over for an eight-cylinder convertible coupé.

Then there are the pioneers, who carve out places for themselves in remote spots, burning off the forest to plant a little more each year, and there is the uncounted army of squatters. These last establish themselves on government lands (where their tenancy, even if unregistered, is almost never disputed) and on those of private owners, and once they have squatted, they are there to stay. So liberal is the law that should a stray family come into your garden and manage to build what would pass for a dwelling without being evicted, they would acquire rights which you would be helpless to deny. This may sound farfetched, but any taxi driver in Barranquilla will show you a whole quarter that grew up by concerted action in a single night of feverish shanty-building on the private grounds of a Colombian gentleman, and which has taken on triumphant permanence. And if by chance an enterprising cultivator contrives to plant a piece of your estate before you surprise him at it, you may neither damage nor impound the crops—a law which also applies to granted rights of way.

The regional differences in Colombian character, which among the gente are as wide as those between Scotch, Irish, English and Welsh, are infinitely more acute when it comes to the *pueblo*. The gente are predominantly Spanish; the others are a far more strongly flavored mixture. In some districts, like Antioquia, Tolima and Caldas, the European strain dominates, and the tincture of Indian blood came from savage and daring tribes. In Cundinamarca and Boyacá, along the Eastern Cordillera, the people seem more Indian than white, and often it is hard to believe that they are not pure Chibcha, the docile, secretive and relatively civilized race that once built a hundred cities between Fusagasugá and Sugamuxi. The whole coast, the Chocó, and to a lesser degree the lovely valley of the Cauca—the Valley—are heavily injected with African stock, both pure and diluted in an infinite variety of gradations.

Thus if generalizations are shaky ground in talking of the bourgeoisie, they are a quagmire in speaking of the heterogeneous proletariat. The Santandereanos, the lean, proud, reckless people of the northeast Cordillera, with their “permanent

irritability" and inveterate feuds, their capacity for work and contempt of life, are entirely different from their neighbors to the south, who are small built, stolid, taciturn and enigmatic. Similarities of climate, terrain and other geographical features in different districts of Colombia have not availed to develop similar types among the inhabitants.

Yet they have, of course, certain things in common, although the intensity may vary from one department to another: Independence, for instance, which goes hand in hand with a remarkable absence of material desires. This insouciance before poverty gives the lower class Colombian an enviable, and sometimes exasperating, freedom. Team work, personal responsibility in a common labor, the pride of being a consciously efficient cog in a comprehensive wheel are not yet part of his philosophy. Acquisitiveness and a yearning to keep up with the Joneses have no power over him. He is indifferent to comfort and restive under regimentation. Regular hours and discipline bore him to extinction. Ease that must be bought with freedom comes too dear; as one Colombian said to me, "The difference between my people and yours is that yours fear physical pain and privation more than moral suffering, while with mine it is just the other way round."

One does not know whether to pity, blame or envy this bone-deep individualism. It is not an advantage to society; it gets in the way of personal advancement in responsibility and position, but certainly it is not ignoble. "Better a handful with quietness than both hands full with travail and vexation of spirit," saith the Preacher; the Colombian peasant, ignorant, poverty-stricken and his own man, agrees with him.

Less *simpática* is the instantly hostile reaction to anything that savors of reproof. The peon whose reply to a reprimand is a bit of more or less active obstructionism is not unique; try even a mild and well-founded complaint in a hotel and the response is sharply resentful. It follows that employers must possess funds of tact that would fit them for the higher reaches of international diplomacy.

For hundreds of years the pueblo—black, brown and white—has been unquestioningly and devoutly Catholic. Their faith is observant and sincere, but it is not distinguished by any great

dogmatic austerity. There is a pagan flavor to it, obstinate and naïve. And among the simpler people exorcism, spells, amulets and potions are still part of everyday life. There is white magic and black, incantations to cure a sick mule (some so potent they must be used with the greatest care), spells to win a beloved's heart, dark rites to bring confusion on an enemy. Some of the less pleasant forms of sorcery must have come to Colombia in the crowded slave ships from Africa, and like those of voodooism, they make curious use of twisted Christian images and invocations. Like so many other "characteristic" things, now that new possibilities of communications and advancing education are reaching into the villages, they are destined to vanish or go underground, together with the shadowy unofficial demons and genii, and the "lonely spirits" that still hover on the outskirts of peasant belief.

It is curious that although most of the primitive peoples still left in Colombia have a remarkable respect for property, they have not communicated it to the Colombian *pueblino*. Sneak thievery is rife, particularly in the cities; a car left unguarded will be found minus its detachable parts, and an open window is an invitation to lift anything that can be hooked out of it. Perhaps this is why the Goajira Indians, when one of their number steals, say contemptuously: "He's no better than a *civilizado*!" On the other hand, although this *ratería* is a constant daily irritation, there is almost no organized crime; banditry is uncommon, gangsterism unknown, and violence for gain extremely rare.

Homicide, however, is so frequent, so almost casual in some regions that the exact figures, if they were obtainable, would be staggering. People kill because they are jealous, or offended, or just for the hell of it; a refusal to drink with a man is a bare-faced provocation to which anyone of spirit must reply with a revolver or a machete, according to his means and social status. Often the results are unpleasant only for the victim; self-defense seems to be a valid excuse even when the recently deceased was a blind cripple with his back turned. The press fulminates against irresponsible criminals and too-lenient justice, but crimes of passion or pride continue to feed the news columns.

Of all the crimes investigated in a year, more than 41 per cent



INDIANS OF
THE UPPER PUTUMAYO



VEGETABLE MARKET
AT CHIQUINQUIRA



CHIQUINQUIRA
A FUNERAL IN GACHETA

PHOTO RAMOS

consists of murders or attempted murders resulting in injury. Another 29 per cent is made up of robbery, petty thievery and cattle rustling. It is rather surprising to find that in this nation of mighty drinkers only a quarter of the total list of homicides and assaults are found to have been committed under the influence of liquor, particularly since the number of them prompted by motives of money or material interest, which might be premeditated, is amazingly small—a scant 5 per cent. I am not sure what this proves; perhaps only the fallacies that lurk in statistics. Santander, in the Eastern Cordillera, leads all the departments both in quantity and quality of homicidal assaults: sixth in order of population, it produces more of them, with a far greater proportion of total success, than any other province. Caldas (“most jealous department”), in spite of its wealth and progressiveness, runs a close second, but seems to have a less sure technique: a much higher percentage of the victims recover.

At the root of Colombia's easy violence is an extraordinary indifference towards death. All the fear and mystery and sublimity with which we invest it, the mixture of terror and exaltation, are to the Colombian peasant an uncut book. And since death has small significance, human life has little importance. It is difficult to explain why this should be. The fact that existence is so often without pleasure or opportunity is not the only answer; people sunk deep in privation and unrewarding toil still cling to the miserable world they know. And how is it that the Church, which has their unswerving faith, has not succeeded in giving them a sense of the sanctity of life or the majesty of death?

The family life of the pueblino is reasonably devoted but frequently unhallowed. It costs money to get married, and involves a certain amount of trouble. Also the women fight shy of a ceremony that makes it impossible for them to leave if their companions turn out badly; once the union has passed by bell and book it is forever, and they like to feel that they *can* walk out, even if they do not choose to do so. Even if there has been no legal marriage, they are usually both faithful and reasonable.

In an hacienda I know near Bogotá, a woman came one morning to lodge a complaint: her husband's fancy had strayed;

she was deprived of his favors and left with nothing but the domestic cares. Her point was not that she was going home to mother, but that she ought to receive a wage. She was willing to stay to cook, clean and generally housekeep, but if that was to be all, then she was entitled to regular pay. The man was called and found the arrangement equitable; a sum was fixed, and the couple departed in amicable understanding.

The number of illegitimate children is correspondingly large. Fortunately, they seldom feel any inconvenience from their technical status; the law makes no discrimination between those born in wedlock and those whose parents dispensed with formalities, and there is no stigma attached to illegitimacy. Legitimate or illegitimate, there are plenty of them. According to the figures of the League of Nations *Year Book* the birth rate in Colombia is 30.6 per thousand, as against 17 per thousand in the United States; the death rate is 15.3 as against our 11.2. It is evident that the population of Colombia is multiplying almost three times as quickly as our own. In fact, unaided by immigration, it doubled in the thirty years between 1900 and 1930.

In writing up the books of the Other Half, a sad amount must go on the debit side of the ledger; yet there is a kind of innocence about it, or at least a pitifulness, that takes away its blackness. And the credit side is comforting, for the evils are of a kind that yields to education, to training, to better living conditions and easier communications. The peasants are hard working; amazingly so when all the conditions are considered. They are touchy, but they are not antagonistic; they respond to kindness and find contentment where the sources seem invisible to the naked eye. They have fortitude and courage and the earthy acuteness of their kind. They have a real feeling for the soil, and their advice on times and seasons, though it may appear based on superstition, is usually extremely practical. And they can be taught the unfamiliar mechanics of industrial labor, as witness the modern textile mills, the tile and brick factories, the breweries and refineries.

Enrique Santos, editor of the liberal *El Tiempo* and brother of the President, sums up the virtues and misfortunes of the rural population in a recent article:

"It is a miracle of virtue in our country people that a century of wretchedness and suffering has not undermined their moral foundations or made them into instruments for unscrupulous adventurers. The campesino endured everything; he went to war to further ideals whose triumph brought him no advantage whatsoever. He fought like a lion, without knowing why. They took him to the polls to vote for candidates who forgot him as soon as his usefulness was over. And today he defends himself with marvellous integrity from false prophets. Liberalism, by a fundamentally mistaken policy, has dedicated all its efforts to the service of the city workers, whose situation is a paradise compared to that of the peasants. To these last are offered only promises. Rural housing is the beginning of justice, but it will be a lame thing if it is not accompanied by sanitation and education."

The slow climb has already begun. Thirty years ago malaria, hookworm, amoebic dysentery, syphilis were little cared for and prevention was almost unknown. Yellow fever was rampant. Now Yellow Jack has been stamped out, and miracles have been accomplished both in identifying and eliminating causes of disease and in educating the people to healthy living. There are maternity and infant-welfare bureaus, medical attendance for school children, lectures and free clinics in the villages. Education is broadening. A new sense of responsibility is germinating. But there is a weight tied to the feet of the reformers: lack of funds. And that is why Colombia needs a fifty-year plan, in which betterment of the peasant's lot and a revised economy will go hand in hand, supporting and strengthening each other.

CHAPTER VI

The Lake of El Dorado

IN THE CONICAL SUMMIT of a nameless peak in the Eastern Cordillera, ten thousand feet or so toward the sky, there is a lonely lake set like a cup to catch the sun. It is not more than half a mile across, and as round as a silver wheel. No road leads to it, only confused and unmarked trails; from month's end to month's end no one comes to disturb its hidden peace. Although it can be reached from Bogotá in four or five hours, I would be willing to wager that more Bogotanos have seen New York than have ever laid eyes on the lake of Guatavita.

Yet this tarn in the Andes shaped the course of history. Because of it, statesmen halfway round the world sat in conclave; fleets were armed in Cádiz and Plymouth and Lisbon; German bankers and English speculators made strange calculations and investments. Because of it, great captains led desperate adventures; kings gained new empires and simple people lost their gods. This is the lake of El Dorado.

The story of Guatavita is the story of gods and demons, of an enchanted princess and a very human prince, of fabulous riches and the efforts to recover them. The last chapter is not yet written. Because it was sacred from the beginning of time, and because a wife of the Lord of Guatavita was lovely and faithless, the little lost lake holds riches beyond the invention of a Scheherazade. Humboldt estimated the drowned treasure at \$300,000,000; De la Kier, of the Royal Institute of Paris, put it at £1,120,000,000. Other calculations have been less moderate. It is still there, in the mud that lies forty or fifty feet below

the shining surface, for the gods have known how to defend their own.

This, however, is not the reason for the name of El Dorado, a name whose origin and real significance was lost almost as soon as it was coined. El Dorado does not mean the Golden City or the Land of Gold. It means exactly what it says: the Gilded Man. Fray Simón, in his *Noticias Historiales de Tierra Firme en el Nuevo Reyno de Granada*—a reasonably compact title for the times—says it was invented by Belalcázar, Pizarro's lieutenant-general in Quito in 1534, who had news from a "foreign" Indian of a country in the mountains to the north where there was great abundance of gold and the green stones we call emeralds. The Indian added that in this land there was a lake, where several times a year the chief made sacrifices and offerings, "being naked, but covered from his head to his feet and hands with a sticky resin, and over it much gold in fine powder, so that . . . it made a second skin of gold." The country was Cundinamarca, and the lake was Guatavita.

Belalcázar and his men, "ravenous for greater discoveries," determined to seek this interesting land, and wishing to distinguish it from others, decided to call it "the province of the gilded man." This, says the author firmly and textually, is the foundation of all the to-do about El Dorado, and all the rest is pure fiction. The *Historical Information* was published in 1624; Fray Simón must have been writing it when Sir Walter Raleigh made his second voyage up the Orinoco, still beckoned by the Golden City of fancy.

Belalcázar was not the only one to hear about the riches of the Eastern Cordillera. Away to the north, on the Caribbean, the Spaniards in Santa Marta listened to confused accounts of it, and the hard-pressed Governor sent out that expedition under Jiménez de Quesada that discovered and conquered Cundinamarca. In Coro, in Venezuela, the Germans learned of it and tried to find it from the eastern plains. Yet fiction is so much more enduring than fact, and men's dreams so much stronger than reality, that when the Conquistadores finally reached the province of El Dorado, and even when they stood beside the lake in the mountaintop, they did not recognize it. El Dorado had become a glorious mirage of shining towers and

golden streets somewhere farther on beyond the mountains or the llanos, irresistible and deadly.

The people of Cundinamarca had a veneration for all rivers and lakes, due, says Simón with great certainty but rather less logic, to the machinations of the Evil One, who took his abode in the waters and then by cunning tricks induced the Indians to worship there, "desiring in his depraved will to thus equal himself to God." But the cult of Guatavita had its roots in something more than this generic reverence—though Satan took a hand here, too.

Very long ago, so long that names are forgotten, there was a Lord of Guatavita who had among his wives one so proud and beautiful that as she exceeded all others in grace, so did she exceed them in the love which the Prince bore her. "This," says the chronicler, "the Princess did not consider as she should, betraying him with a noble of the court, and not so secretly but that it came to the ears of her husband." The lover died by torture; the wife was not touched, but because of certain things that her husband devised, "her suffering could not have been greater if she had undergone the same punishment as the aggressor." Also the Chief commanded that everywhere her shame should be sung, in the palace and in taverns and court-yards, "as a lesson to other women and a punishment to the adulteress."

And so one day the Princess, "in whom the pain of these bitter entertainments had so grown that to flee from them she determined to flee from life itself," stole from the palace enclosure and climbing to the holy lake threw herself in together with the little daughter born to her of the Usaque, her husband. "In mortal anguish, because he had not believed that the sufferings of his wife would bring her to such a pass," the Chief summoned the greatest sorcerer among the priests to give him again his dead love.

"Tell her I beseech her to come back," he urged; "tell her there will be no more mention of what is past."

After the prescribed rites and incantations the priest dived into the water. He was gone a long time, but he rose to the surface alone.

"The Princess is alive," he told the Usaque. "I have talked

with her. She sits in a palace more beautiful than yours, with the demon, in the form of a small dragon, crouched in the folds of her skirt. She will not return, for she says she is happier there."

Then the Chief was in black despair, for he knew that he would never again see his heart's desire. And he commanded the priest to go down once more, to beg for the girl child. The sorcerer came with the child in his arms; but she was dead, and without eyes, for the demon had contrived that being without soul or profit to men, they would leave her with her mother. "And so it was ordered that the little body should be cast again into the lake, where it sank, leaving the Lord of Guatavita without consolation in anything for the great love that he had for his daughter and her mother, notwithstanding what she had done to him."

From then on, pilgrims flocked from every part of the land, each with an offering and a prayer. The tracks that led up the mountain became wide, well-beaten roads; each town and village had its resident priests in a cabin beside the shore. But it was only at the great festivals held twice or thrice a year that the Usaque made ritual sacrifice. Then, while thousands upon thousands of the faithful stood close around the green rim of the lake, he appeared, golden and splendid in the morning sun. The massed and motionless crowd looked with dazzled eyes as, to the sound of music and thudding drums, the Gilded One made his way to a raft piled with gold and emeralds. When the raft reached the place where cords, crossed from shore to shore, marked the middle of the lake, the music was still, and the people turned their backs that the rites should not be profaned. The Prince gave the treasure he had brought to the waters, and then washed off in them the golden skin he wore; the throng on the shore tossed their own offerings to the holy ones, and the ceremony was complete.

Simón explains it all. Of course the Princess was dead. The story that she still lived, forever fair and young, in the enchanted palace, with the demon nestled in her skirts in the form of a little dragon, was nonsense. The truth was that the Devil, to further confound the heathen in error, took on the shape and appearance of the Princess, and spoke with her voice. Those

apparitions, when she seemed to stand on the waters, her body bare above the wrapped skirts of painted cotton save for her jewels, were just another trick. That too was the Devil, appearing "in the form and gesture of the Princess to make the people more fixed in their vain superstitions." And if the vision foretold the future—what of it? They were events "which depend on natural causes, which he also knows, such as that there would be drought, or famine, or illness, or that such-and-such a chief would die."

Cundinamarca, surrounded on all sides by savage lands and cannibal tribes, was like a civilized island in a dark and dangerous sea. There was no friendship between the Chibchas of the Cordillera and their barbarous neighbors, but they carried on a steady trade, and for centuries, in exchange for salt and emeralds from the highlands, gold from the westerly valleys flowed to the mountain land. It was used little, if at all, as a medium of exchange, but wrought into idols and ornaments and amulets.

Of all the goldsmiths of Cundinamarca, those most skillful in blending the yellow metal with copper and silver, in molding and soldering and hammering it into shapes of men and beasts, in laying on it the appliquéés of slender twisted wire, were the smiths of Guatavita. So jealous was the Usaque of his artisans that he would lend them to other princes only if for each one a noble were sent as hostage from the court of the borrower. The hidden weakness in this careful scheme became apparent when the Zipa of Bacatá, the Usaque's neighbor to the south, borrowed so many craftsmen and sent so many lusty young nobles in their place that the united hostages took over the principality for their own lord.

They did not, however, take over the golden statues that stood, life size, in a temple beside the lake. These were glimpsed soon after by the invading Spaniards, but before they could be seized, they had disappeared in the lake. And with the arrival of the conquerors, other treasures went to swell the underwater store, for chieftains cast in all their possessions rather than have them fall into the greedy hands of the bearded oppressors. Chief Simijaca alone sent forty *cargas* (10,000 pounds) of fine gold, as was confirmed by his son and by the porters who

carried it, "and others did the same, some with more, some with less."

Surprisingly little has been done about the gold and emeralds of El Dorado. Only three serious, if insufficiently equipped, efforts to recover the treasure have been made in four hundred years, for the abortive attempt of Lázaro Fonte, one of the more colorful Conquistadores, can hardly be counted. The first was by a certain Antonio Sepúlveda, a merchant of Santa Fe, who went to Spain in 1580 and secured an exclusive concession from the Crown, together with a loan as working capital. Gangs of unenthusiastic Indian laborers cut through the mountain rim; the waters sank a little, and a fair number of the lesser offerings made by modest folk from the shore came to light. But just as discovery of an emerald as large as an egg, and a high priest's mitre and staff in wrought gold, seemed to promise a bigger catch, funds gave out; the Royal Treasury claimed all the proceeds to the value of five or six thousand ducats, and the contractor was left penniless. The diggings caved in, the lake filled again, and poor Sepúlveda "was obliged to abandon his camp and workings, and get him to a hospital to die, there being no means left to him for anything else, nor anyone afterwards who would risk taking the job in hand."

Guatavita was left to the sun and the clouds, and it may be to the Princess, for nearly two hundred and fifty years. Then, the War of Independence being over, a Bogotano named Paris turned his attention to the matter. José Ignacio Paris, better known as Pepe, was a born promoter; his partner in the venture was Captain Charles Cochrane, a smeller-out of concessions recently arrived from England. They went at the business with high hopes, but as usual the lake held out longer than the available capital. Seventy years later a Colombian company did a little ineffectual excavation, and then invited a British concern to take over.

The English company was called Contractors, Limited, and its capital was £30,000. Its methods may have been more scientific than those of Antonio Sepúlveda, but the results were rather less rewarding. In the course of centuries, the gold had washed into the funnel-shaped center of the lake, and when after years of work the water level was lowered, it was found

that the bottom consisted of twenty-five or thirty feet of mud that became almost as hard as cement on exposure to the air. Thirty thousand pounds does not mean much in equipment and running expenses for a long enterprise on a mountaintop in the Andes. At the end of two years the company had recovered £2,000 worth of oddments and spent £32,000. Another £10,000 was raised, but the war of 1914, superimposed on financial exhaustion, put an end to the whole affair. The only visible traces left of all the high hopes and bitter disappointments are a few stones in a clearing above the lake, and the wedge-shaped break in the crater wall where Sepúlveda cut it through three hundred and sixty years ago.

I rode up to Guatavita on a day when the air was like an aquamarine, so clear it seemed the first morning of creation. To right and left the ridges swooped down to the Sabana, distinct in each cleanly modeled detail; behind us, far to the west, where the Cordillera shuts in the valley before plunging down to the Magdalena, the crest was drawn small and sharp in amethyst and blue. Nearer objects stood out in bright relief; farther scenes had an almost unreal precision; a horseman four or five hundred feet away was detached from his background with the exaggerated clarity of a figure in a stereoscope.

Inside the crater, however, there is only the lake, the steep green walls that encircle it, and the sky. On such a day the water is just flecked to hammered silver; the silence is like crystal, etched very lightly with the shadow of sound—a whisper of wind-touched sedge, the rustle of some moving thing in the grass, the infinitely faint echo of a barking dog. A stray honey-bee resounds with the drone of a banking plane; a flushed covey of partridge whirrs into the bushes like sudden thunder.

The lake, bright and unrevealing, does not reflect the bluffs or the creamy clouds. But when we saw it, some trick of reflection barred it from side to side, so that two paths were laid on the water like a cross, whose center was a pool of light. We sat and looked at it for a long time without talking very much. Something of the long centuries of pilgrimage and prayer, of the faith and fear of countless generations, of magic and sortilege and sacrifice, still breathes in that sun-bathed bowl, compelling, if not to belief, to the understanding of belief. It does

not seem foolish to doubt whether any treasure that can be counted in ounces fine and currency return would be worth violation of the Lagoon of the Gilded Man—or whether, indeed, the tangible force of steam and steel could ever break the quiet resistance of the vanished gods.

CHAPTER VII

Conquest

BOGOTÁ, CITY OF THE HOLY FAITH, was founded with fitting solemnity, due legal forms and the blessing of God in the year of grace 1538, by don Gonzalo Jiménez de Quesada. It consisted of a church and twelve huts, each dedicated to an apostle; the full name conferred upon it was Santa Fe de Bogotá del Nuevo Reino de Granada de las Indias del Mar Océano.

There is a homesick sound to this pompous title. Quesada, the young lawyer who became the great captain of a desperate adventure, discoverer and conqueror of the eastern highlands, was born in Granada in Spain. The Sabana, "a wide and long plain, very flat and like to that in which the city of Santafé is founded in Granada," spoke to him of the valley of his childhood. It may not have been exactly like home, this far shelf of the Andes, but after the dreadful months along the Magdalena, when each man struggled through monstrous jungles with death at his elbow, it was near enough. It was not hot and savage and lonely like the lowlands; the air was as fresh as springtime in Castille and the "great walled enclosures of the Lord of Bacatá and many other chiefs his neighbors and vassals . . . from afar had the appearance of sumptuous edifices of great majesty." The lofty valley called the Sabana of Bogotá was part of the country of Cundinamarca, and its people, compared to the naked aborigines of the Magdalena, were a highly civilized race.

It is five hundred miles in line of air from the coast at Santa Marta to Bogotá. How many miles the famished, disease-ridden, indomitable expedition of discovery toiled before reach-

ing the plateau can only be guessed. It took them a year. They made a few painful miles each day, forcing a way where even now there is not so much as a trail. They were always in danger, always hungry, always tormented by fever and insects and stifling heat. Often they walked for days in water up to their knees. To physical suffering was added the oppression of a land where every animal and growing thing seemed strange and hostile. That any of them should have come through alive proves that their astonishing capacity for endurance was backed by cast-steel, triple-plate nerves. "Drunk with a heroic and brutal dream" as Heredia's poem has it, they fought by unimagined ways towards an unknown goal, and gained it with a sublime matter-of-factness that is almost disconcerting.

Eight hundred and seventy-five men left Santa Marta under Quesada by land and river that day in April 1536 to seek the mountains where emeralds lay like pebbles on the ground. One hundred and sixty-seven living skeletons reached the plateau. They started at the worst possible time, just when the rains were beginning, sent by that Governor (Adelantado) don Pedro Fernández de Lugo who so notably combined inexperience with self-assurance, but whose kindness and generosity in times of trial earned him the title of "the Good."

Colonial administrators are always tried by newly arrived authorities from home who swell with the conviction that they know more than the men on the spot, and it was exactly the same four hundred years ago. The Governor was one of those unfortunate men whose well-intentioned conceit is only exceeded by their incompetence. He had received Santa Marta in fief from Charles V for the space of two lives, his own and that of his heir, and in one year had seen a difficult situation become steadily worse; the natives were more hostile and they came nearer the settlement than ever before. His son Alonso—a thoroughly bad lot who was uniformly successful in life—had decamped with the only gold they had managed to lay their hands on. And Santa Marta itself, first enduring colony and first regular port of call of all South America, was in desperate straits.

"No food could be found either with money or without it," says the old chronicle, "and to famine was added a rapid plague

that took people off in a few days. Religious services were abbreviated by putting fifteen or twenty men in one grave, and the number of these people who died each day was such that in order that the clamor of the bells should not discourage the sick, the Governor decreed that for no death should they be tolled or rung, and thus they brought them in silence to burial."

The harassed colonists in Santa Marta had heard about the fabulous riches of Perú, and the Adelantado saw that his new grant threatened to dissolve under his hand unless something comparable could be found near home. Then, too, his own financial problems were becoming awkward: the eighteen ships and twelve hundred men, the equipment and arms he had brought with him from Spain were all on the cuff, and his creditors were becoming impatient. The Governor gathered together an expedition, as usual elaborate and impractical, but fortunately he did not accompany it. Gonzalo Jiménez de Quesada, the man of law who had been just a year in the country, was given command; it speaks worlds for his qualities that although he had under him men like Sanmartín and Lebrija and Tafur, veterans of many expeditions, who had years of experience to his months, they served him faithfully and well.

The departure took place on Holy Wednesday. Contemporary writers have described the horrors of that hellish march with the flat and shocking simplicity of the times. As the troops toiled south, and weeks became months, the time came when they devoured the leather of their shields and straps and belts, when sick men felt the speculative eyes of their companions rest heavily upon them and were too spent to care. The eighty-score men who finally reached the foot of the Cordillera were rationed to forty grains of parched maize a day. They were scarred and nearly naked; even the wadded cotton "armor" they wore against the poisoned arrows of the Indians had long since rotted away. They had had a moment of despair and doubt at Tora that came near wrecking the whole enterprise. But they did not turn back. Somehow they dragged themselves up the precipices of the Sierra de Opón, somehow they got their horses up, hoisting them when necessary with slings of creepers—those horses that had been nursed through the swamps and jungles God knows how.

The hundred and sixty-seven "simulacros de hombres" proposed to annex a large, populous and well-organized country for Spain and the Church. Absurd and magnificent bravado! Yet that is precisely what they did.

The people of Cundinamarca were numerous enough to have wiped out the little band at any moment, but they were too civilized for their own good. They had a religious culture and a tradition, and both told them that the bearded centaurs were of more than human origin. It was a relief to see that the strangers could come apart from their horses, but the Chibchas did not, unfortunately for them, perhaps, try the simple test a more primitive people had used, and hold the demigods' heads under water to verify their divinity. Untested, the aura held, and the Spaniards took cities and captured princes, sacked temples and garnered treasure, preaching the virtues of the true religion. The process, at once laudable and remunerative, was known, in a phrase worthy of modern political terminology, as "pacification of the natives."

At the outskirts of Bogotá, the men of the Zipa barred the way, and one of them, armed with a lance and the broad arrows that were shot from slings called *quesques*, came out to offer single combat; the Spaniard who accepted the challenge charged at the gallop, and seizing the Indian by the hair, bore him to the enemy ranks. The Chibchas were numbed by the sense of preordained disaster; Medrano noted that they were mild and timorous, and that "they had acquired a particular and integral dread of the Spaniards." They went out to battle at their Lord's command, but paralyzed by the doubt that in withstanding the invaders they offended the very Sun, their resistance had the perfunctory ardor of the unconvinced. Within a few months the struggle was over, and the King-Emperor had added another realm to his fast-growing possessions.

"It is an extremely healthy country," wrote Juan de Sanmartín and Antonio de Lebrija in 1540, "for since we have been here, which might be two years or more, we have not lost one man because of any ill." They went on to say how fruitful and rich in game the Sabana was, and added the wistful rider that Spanish women might well live in such a temperate climate.

Perhaps the first hardy wives and mothers had already arrived; they started as soon as word filtered out of the new conquest, and a party of them reached the Sabana with Lebrón's ill-starred expedition within the year. At this time the colony was commanded by Quesada's brother Hernán—a man of very different stamp from the wise and humane Conqueror. Quesada himself was in Spain, where he had gone in unexpected company, his departure hastened by what must surely be one of the strangest coincidences in history.

Five months after the men of Santa Marta had established their high-sounding "city," Cundinamarca had seen one of those amazing encounters that novelists dare not imagine: the meeting of Federmann, Belalcázar and Quesada. Federmann came from Coro in Venezuela, the German-managed colony east of Maracaibo; after nearly four years of wandering in the llanos, his band had passed the Cordillera to Pasca from the east. Belalcázar came from Perú, where with Almagro he had conquered Quito (then part of the Inca empire) for Pizarro; he had already founded Popayán and Cali in the valley of the Cauca. None of the three knew of the others' presence until they were a few leagues from each other, and each one had exactly the same number of followers: one hundred and sixty-six.

Belalcázar's men, "having come from Perú, a very rich and prosperous country," wore "rich clothes of silk, and fine cloaks, silver ornaments, coats of mail, and [had] many Indian servants from Perú, and a great quantity of pigs to sustain them"; rather tactlessly "the soldiers of Belalcázar made fun of the clothes and habiliments of the men of Quesada," which were fashioned of the cotton cloth of the Indians. Federmann's worn troops were insufficiently covered with pieces of the skins of wild animals they had killed. There was a certain amount of jockeying for place, but in the end an amicable agreement was reached, and the three Conquistadores set out for Spain to present their claims. At Cartagena they presented their gold to the Real Hacienda, where it was weighed, melted down and stamped, and then set sail in the bark *Nuestra Señora de la Concepción* for Cádiz. Belalcázar was granted the governorship of Popayán from the borders of Quito northward 800 kilometers toward the

Caribbean; Federmann became involved in a lawsuit against the Welzers, the "concessionaires" for Coro, and died more or less discredited in Madrid in 1542. Quesada had himself a time.

Strictly speaking, the Conquistador should have reported back to Santa Marta. But the old Adelantado was dead, and Quesada had no desire to see his conquest reduced to the dimensions of another raid. He had worked out a practically flawless project: he would buy the governorship of Santa Marta from the unsavory young Lugo, to whom it had descended by inheritance, before presenting his report, and thus acquire authority over the lands discovered by him as an agent of the colony, and then have the title confirmed by the Crown. The King was away in Flanders, and the deal was made; Quesada handed over thirteen thousand ducats of the agreed twenty-odd thousand and prepared for a rosy future. At this point Lugo began to do some calculation on his own account; it seemed evident that if Gonzalo Jiménez could produce so much money after a few months in the new country, there should be plenty more left for an enterprising governor to pick up. Hanging on to the sum already received on the not unreasonable grounds that it was due his father anyway for organizing the expedition, he tore up the agreement and set sail for a series of highly shady operations in the New Realm.

Quesada, realizing that this was not the moment to return to Santa Fe, decided to compensate for the thin years of self-denial. Europe was his oyster; he compensated vigorously for nine years—in Lisbon in the none too saintly company of one of the Pizarro brothers, and extensively and expensively in other countries. Alonso de Lugo had long since scuttled for Madrid one jump ahead of the investigating commission when, in 1549, "after having consumed and scattered in divers parts of the world great sums in gold and emeralds of infinite value which he had taken out of this land," Quesada came back to New Granada with the vague title of Marshal.

He was far from settling down to slippered monotony, however. The "good land, land of abundance, land clear and serene, land in which to build a perpetual home," which Juan de Castellanos, poet-conquistador, had sung in lavish numbers in his tale of the Conquest, was kind to the aging discoverer; at

seventy he was still young enough to lead a new expedition to the llanos to seek the City of Gold "and establish mills, farms and towns." He took with him three hundred soldiers and fifteen hundred Indians and slaves; more than a thousand horses (those first forty nags that terrified the Chibchas must have been added to rapidly in thirty years), six hundred cows, eight hundred hogs. It was three years before they reached the Orinoco; less than one hundred soldiers, a few Indians and eighteen horses came back. Quesada had put his own money into the venture; after one more triumphant campaign against the natives, he died in Mariquita on the sixteenth of February 1579, "being over eighty and a poor man."

The Spanish conquest was cruel, splendid and altogether incredible. That small bands of adventurers could subdue whole countries—countries densely populated, well armed and relatively highly developed—is hardly less extraordinary than that any of them should have escaped annihilation from disease and stray tribes of aborigines before they could even launch their foolhardy enterprises. One hundred and sixty-seven men conquered Cundinamarca; Pizarro took the Inca empire with a hundred and sixty-eight; Cortés marched on Mexico with four hundred and fifteen. Why they escaped destruction is a mystery; how they could face the appalling risks and hardships of those year-long "journeys," as they were mildly termed, can be partly understood.

It would be hard to imagine instruments more adapted to their ends than the Spaniards of the sixteenth century to the conquest of the New World. They took naturally to the adventure of the Indies because they had been conditioned to it for countless generations. The only fit occupation for a gentleman was fighting, and through the centuries before Columbus set sail from Palos they had exercised it enthusiastically and practically continuously. They fought the Arabs, the Berbers, the French and each other; the Christian kingdoms filled in the gaps with civil strife, and for a hundred and seventy years there was nearly always a crusade in progress to gather up the slack. In odd moments the quick and unsparing duels required by hair-trigger honor kept them in training.

Indifferent to comfort, tempered to privation, contemptuous of death, restless, arrogant and devout, they might have been forged by providence for the express purpose of winning a world for God and Spain.

All aggression is excused with the "we're only doing this for your own good" motive, but the Conquistadores really believed it. The militant faith that sent men to storm the walls of Jerusalem and perish that the Sepulcher be freed from the infidels still lived. If while saving a continent they made their fortunes, what could be better? True, the methods were somewhat drastic, but they were employed on excellent authority. The Papal Bull sent by Clement VII to Charles V is quite explicit:

"You will compel, and with all zeal cause the barbarous nations to come to the knowledge of God, Maker and Founder of all things," the cramped characters read, "not only by edicts and admonitions, but also by force of arms if needful, in order that their souls may partake of the Heavenly Kingdom."

Salvâtion, or else. . . .

Thus, with each expedition of discovery and "pacification" there went priests and friars who "naked, hungry and disfigured" endured all that the soldiers suffered, without hope of personal gain or glory. Their prestige was great, and they used it both to maintain harmony among the Spanish and to temper the iron despotism with which the victors treated their late opponents. Some, like the two Las Casas—Fray Bartolomé, the Apostle to the Indians, and Fray Domingo, chaplain to Quesada—have their names writ large in the early history of America; hundreds labored in courageous and devoted anonymity.

The Conquest has been tagged with the label of unique brutality and greed, rather unfairly. It was ruthless, but it was not unique—except, perhaps, in daring. Certainly it would ill become us to cast even a small pebble. The Spaniards despoiled the Indians, but were genuinely concerned about their immortal souls; they constrained them to labor in the fields and in the mines, but they did not drive them from the land; they exploited them, but they also married them. Our own "red" men were not so lucky.

The abuses from which the vanquished natives suffered were

never condoned by the Spanish government. Even Columbus fell from favor when it became evident that he ill-treated the Indians of Hispaniola, and from the very first the Kings of Spain emanated decrees that were shining models of justice and magnanimity. They established the rights of the Indians as free subjects of the king, forbade forced labor, enjoined fair dealing and kindness. Considering the social conditions that still prevailed in Europe, they were miracles of liberality. Unfortunately, the difficulty of enforcing laws that touch pocket and position is in direct ratio to the distance between the ruler and the ruled, and New Granada was a long way from old Granada. There was an astonishing amount of travel back and forth across the "tenebrous sea" which only a few decades before had been perilous mystery, but the fact remains that Bogotá and Popayán were as far from Madrid as Lassa from New York, and rather harder to get at.

Thus in spite of the frequent visits of uncompromising judges and the repeated instructions of the Crown, the colonists continued to follow the course declared by Belalcázar and the council of Popayán: "se obedece pero no se cumple"—obedience but not fulfillment. Manual labor was not for conquerors. What about prestige? What about authority? Anyone who has lived in the Orient or India will know just what they meant. The Muysca nobles never abased themselves to labor, and was not a gentleman of Spain the equal of a Chibcha? As for the Panches and Quimbayas and Mocoas and the other tribes of the rest of the New Realm, they were for the most part cannibals whose table manners were peculiarly uncouth. The people of Cundinamarca were well enough, but it was too much to ask a Spaniard to consider the naked savage surprised in the act of removing and devouring portions of his still-living adversary as a fellow-subject and a brother.

Spain was a great colonizer, the greatest perhaps that the world has ever known. Not a ship set sail for the "Indies" that did not carry seeds and plants and livestock and even flowers. The first wheat was reaped in Tunja less than a year after the men of Santa Marta reached the Sabana; within a few decades the domestic animals and fruits and flowers of Europe were common in all Spanish America. There were colleges in Bogotá

and Popayán, schools (even for the Indians), masters of music and fencing and the arts, booksellers and even drugstores a century before such things were dreamed of in North America.

The Spanish were exquisitely legal minded. The first marauding explorers founded their "cities" with meticulous formality; the organization of government was surprisingly complete, and even the riotous and highhanded *caudillos* who swashbuckled in the provinces did not question the authority of emissaries duly accredited by the King, but meekly submitted even when submission meant disgrace or death.

An organized society, a standard of gracious living, the amalgamation of the Indians into the scheme of things, the establishment of the religion of Christ—these were the fabric of Spanish domination in the New World. Whatever the faults of colonial administration, and they were many and glaring, Spain built not unworthily an empire that was to last for three hundred and thirty years.

CHAPTER VIII

Children of the Sun

WHEN DON GONZALO JIMÉNEZ DE QUESADA led the dragged remnant of his expedition over the last tremendous bastions of the eastern Andes and into the sabana of Bogotá, even the magnificent impassibility of the Conquistadores was a little shaken. Backed by the jumbled peaks of the Cordillera, the cool and smiling country of Cundinamarca—which means Land of the Condor—lay studded with villages, crisscrossed by well-worn roads, patched with cultivated fields; the towns, built in geometrical pattern, had fine houses within fenced enclosures; there were bright flags and steep thatched roofs. The discoverers, with eyes long accustomed to the lonely savagery of hostile jungles, looked out over the plain and called it the Valley of Castles.

The Chibchas, who were also called Muyscas, “People,” had been so long in the Andean plateau that they had not even a dim legend of migration; most authorities agree, however, that they must have come down from the north, through Mexico, and before that, from Asia; Alexander says that under other names they extended as a race group as far north as Nicaragua and south as far as Ecuador. Isolated by mountains, jungles and savage neighbors, they lived in a relatively advanced state of what we call civilization—that all-embracing word which means everything and nothing—self-contained and apart.

Cundinamarca of the Muyscas included all the mountainous region of the present departments of Cundinamarca and Boyacá, from Fusagasugá on the south to Sogamoso in the north. Within these boundaries there were innumerable feudal

states whose *caciques* enjoyed varying degrees of wealth and independence. In the decades preceding the Conquest, many of these had been forced to acknowledge the overlordship of the great Zipa of Bacatá, he who was called the Chief of Chiefs, and with the artless loyalty of a forgotten age they served him in pride and faithfulness. He ruled from Muequetá, near the site Quesada chose for the settlement that was to become the capital of Colombia; and although his power was absolute he must have been both wise and just, for in spite of the limited resources of the Chibchas and the complete absence of domestic animals or mechanical devices, the realm was on the whole as prosperous and thickly populated as most European countries of the time.

Nothing remains of the temples overlaid with gold or the proud towns ruled by chieftains whose names meant Ruler of the Heights, Song of the Forest, Strength of Lions; built of wood and thatch, they have long since vanished like the men who lived in them. Neither are there any writings from the days when the Zipas held court in Muequetá, sitting on their golden thrones surrounded by priests and counselors, bright cloths spread under the princely feet that must never touch the ground. Oviedo speaks of "folded books of deerskin parchment" inscribed in the Chibcha tongue, but if they ever existed, none has been found. It is only in the names of the towns and villages, and through the accounts of their conquerors, that the record has been preserved.

By the time the Spaniards came to the Land of the Condor, the Chibchas had not only a religion of some nobility and a moral code that, according to historians, had the peculiar merit of being observed, but also an established body of laws. Homicide, incest, robbery, untruthfulness, treason were crimes; industry, cleanliness, charity and courage were enjoined by their faith. We cannot do much better.

In the beginning each small country was all the world; its gods were the only gods, its people the chosen people, its territory the special creation of the Omnipotent, its moral laws—severe as all the rules erring humanity creates for itself—a unique revelation. So the Chibcha scheme of things was woven with the recurrent motifs that crop up in a hundred creeds:

the Creator, all-wise and all-powerful, giver of light; the Mother-Goddess and the accompanying Divine Youth; the Messiah, link between the Supreme One and his children; the Devil, cunning to induce mankind in error; the jolly god of wine; the deity of fields and crops. There was the Sun, Lord of Life, and the Moon, a gentle deity, beautiful and kind. Heaven was a fruitful land without drought or storm or sickness, the underworld a cold and tenebrous region to which souls were ferried across a dark river in a boat made of cobwebs.

In the beginning—so the legend runs—before the waters had left the valleys or the forests clothed the mountains, the world lay in fog and darkness, silent and without life. Then Chiminigagua, the Omnipotent, in whom are all things and from whom all things proceed, took two black birds, very swift and strong, and bade them carry light to the land of the Chibchas. The birds flew back and forth, beating the air with giant wings, so that the mists were broken and the gloom dispelled. And Chiminigagua ordered the waters to recede, and divide from the earth, and he created the Sun, that the world might be warmed, and the Moon, that there should be comfort when the Sun rested behind the hills. When all these things had been done, Chiminigagua caused Bachúe, the Deep-Breasted, who was called also the Good Woman, to come forth from the lake of Iguaque, leading a man-child by the hand. For many years the woman of the lake and the boy lived in the plains beyond the Cordillera to the East; when he was grown, they came to the Sabana, and their children peopled the valleys of Cundinamarca. Many sons were born to Bachúe, six at each birth, and they grew strong and wise in the counsels of their mother.

In the fullness of time the first parents returned to their lake and were transformed into two snakes, so that ever after snakes were sacred to the Chibcha people, as were lagoons and the waters that run from them.

There is another story of the dawn of the world. According to this version, the fog-enshrouded darkness of primordial earth held two beings: the lord of Sogamoso and his nephew, the chief of Ramiriquí. As the eons passed, these grew tired of their lonely existence; consulting together, they made man, molding him from yellow clay. And having made man, they made woman,

taking the hollow stem of a tall plant and shaping it delicately; and into the man and woman they had formed, they breathed their own breath and gave them life.

The responsibilities of creation are heavier than appears in the first flush of inspiration; Sogamoso and Ramiriquí were confronted with the problem of their creatures' future. Ramiriquí ascended to the heavens and became Súa, the Sun, who causes corn to grow and fruit to mature; and since it is not good that the burning rays shine unceasingly on the earth, Sogamoso went to be the Moon, Chía, and cheer the hours when Súa rested and left his children in darkness.

The Chibchas lived in peace for many years, following the laws that the first mother had taught them. Then there appeared among them a woman of a very different stamp from the wise and prolific Bachúe. This stranger, whose name was Huitaca, was beautiful and perverse and enchanting, and with her coming the Chibchas suddenly became conscious of the ennui of unvarying devotion to a creature known as the Good Woman. For centuries they had not wavered in sober absorption with the solider virtues; now, fascinated, they gave themselves up to new and diverting pleasures with all the enthusiasm of those elderly victims of repression that popular science has made so familiar. Things went from bad to worse, and the tutelary deity of Cundinamarca became more and more angry as his reproofs went unheeded.

This Chibchacum, entrusted locally with the details of divine administration by Chiminigagua, the Supreme One, had the anxious despotism of those who exercise a delegated power. The Chibchas were not only licentious, they were disrespectful; they ignored with drunken laughter the commands of the Vicar of the Lord. It was not to be borne; on his own authority Chibchacum changed the lovely and disreputable Huitaca to an owl, and ordered the flood to blot out the land of the wicked.

Day after day it rained, and the waters rose in the valley. Finally, only the high peaks were above the waves, as it had been in the beginning. The survivors gathered on the mountaintops and prayed to Bochica, the Messenger of God. They admitted that they had sinned, but claimed that the punishment was excessive; they asked that Chibchacum should be put in

his place. Bochica listened, and agreed; he came riding upon the rainbow, and smote the mountains with his golden wand so that a cleft was opened by which the waters emptied into the valleys, a cleft that can still be seen, as it was when the world was young, with the waters thundering over the brink to lose themselves in mist far below. Poor Chibchacum met the fate that lies in wait for the overzealous; convicted of abuse of authority, he was sentenced to hold up the world for evermore on his shoulders, and when from time to time he shifts his heavy load, the trembling of the earth tells of his weariness.

All the Chibcha legends are interesting, for they have the dramatic humanity and the psychological verity of most primitive tales. The prince who adored when he could not respect, and whose love made humiliation a little thing; Tomagata, a gentle soul in a repulsive body, who gave up joy and found happiness; Hunsahúa, who loved where the gods forbade, and fathered a stone; Nemequene, who held honor more precious than his own brother, and followed justice in sorrow. The minor gods and demons are comfortingly like men—stronger, gifted with supernatural powers, but without too much chilly perfection. They made mistakes, and forgot, and loved and hated; they did not have the daunting impartiality of greater deities.

Bochica, Envoy of the Omnipotent, was not one of these hearthstone gods, and there is an intriguing quality of fact in the whole story of his coming. Fu of the Devil's Stone may be only an old wives' tale, and Nencatacoa but the personification of the heartening pleasures of alcohol, but Bochica must have really existed. He came to Cundinamarca from the east, from the direction of the Orinoco, and when his mission was over he returned, alone as when he came, beyond the mountains and the llanos. Unlike most heroes, he was not young and vigorous, but full of years; he leant upon a shepherd's crook and his long white beard fell to his waist. (This beard is one of the most curious features of the Bochica legend. It is extremely hard to imagine whiskers of which you have never heard, and the Chibchas were beardless.)

The Messenger of God was dressed in long robes, and a mantle covered his shoulders; his skin was fair, and on his forehead was the sign of the cross. He went up and down the

land, teaching, and wherever he stopped the people crowded to hear him. He preached of the resurrection of the body and of the Last Judgment, of the afterlife and the immortality of the soul, and of the beneficent power of God; he enjoined his followers to practice good works and charity. Also, he taught the Chibchas to spin thread from the bolls of the cotton tree, and weave cloth, and dye it in bright colors; for this he was called the Master Weaver. The children of Bachúe said that Bochica lived with them fourteen centuries before the Conquistadores—whose coming he foretold—took for themselves the land of the Sun and banished the ancient gods; the Spaniards believed that he was St. Bartholomew. Some of them must have remembered, when after a time they had learnt to understand the Chibcha speech, the taking of Sogamoso and the priest of the Sun, and wondered. It seems to me that it is a kind of postscript to the story of Bochica.

When the soldiers of Quesada burst open the doors of the temple of Iracá in the holy city of Sogamoso, they found only one person inside, standing immobile in the glare of the torches that drew a thousand reflections from the gold and gem-incrusted walls and the splendid rows of princely mummies. This was a priest, dressed in long robes of deep scarlet. He did not move when the jewels were torn from the altar and the sacred dead were profaned with rough and avid hands, but stood silent and watched with steady contempt the destruction of the House of the Sun. When a torch dropped by greedy hands set the gold-incrusted hangings ablaze and forced the Spaniards to flee, he stood erect and scornful while the flames licked at his red robe, and still silent was consumed together with the place the Chibchas held most sacred. And although the faces of the men of Cundinamarca were hairless as those of children, the high priest of Súa had a luxuriant white beard that fell to his jeweled belt, and in his hand was a tall crook.

It is extraordinary that a people whose religious and moral systems were so advanced, and who had evolved a body of laws and a social organization, should have been so feeble when it came to mechanical ingenuity. In questions of engineering and construction they simply were not there; the cannibal Quimbayas had more tools and better artisans than they. The wheel,

that great civilizer, never occurred to them; the monumental buildings achieved by contemporary civilizations to the north and south were undreamed of. They seem to have been a philosophical rather than a practical race, which is one reason they lost out against the impact of European imperialism. A people who "esteemed gold no more than dross, yet for the color's sake, adorned themselves with it," as the old book says; who, when victorious in war, considered the incident closed and forebore to oppress the vanquished, and when defeated became loyal and respected allies—such a people could not long survive contact with the outside world.

There are no more Chibchas.

Somewhere in the mountains behind the Sabana, concealed in caverns or in the beds of streams, there are the still inviolate tombs of the Lords of Bacatá. The places of burial were secret, though they were fixed by the priests on the day the ruler ascended the throne and took in his hand the golden scepter of Muequetá. When a Zipa died, the body lay in state for six days, while the city rang with lamentation and the story of his virtues and prowess. Then, wrapped in mantles painted with the designs of rank, it was laid in a casket made of a hollowed palm, lined and covered with plates of beaten gold. The Zipa's choicest possessions and richest jewels were placed beside him; his favorite concubines and slaves, drugged with *borrachero*, were killed and buried in the same pit. All the diligent greed of Conquistadores and *guaqueros* has not succeeded in discovering one of these concealed sepulchers. Saguanmachica, Nemequene, Tisquesusa—these and a score of others lie private in their graves, a little dust enclosed in a king's ransom.

Neither have the hidden treasures that escaped the conquerors been unearthed. Cundinamarca never had the riches of Perú, but in centuries of trading they accumulated incredible quantities of the metal they esteemed for its color's sake. Quesada and his men got plenty of loot—some say they took 20,000 pounds of gold from Sogamoso alone, and over 18,000 emeralds, though Medrano, less romantic but probably more accurate, puts the figure at only 600 pounds—and the pile of gold they gathered in the courtyard of the Zaque of Tunja was so high that one horseman could not see another over the top,

but there were huge treasures that escaped them. The paramount Zipa of Bacatá, who had advance news of the sort of thing he might expect from these hairy creatures who lacked the discretion of other supernatural beings with whom he was acquainted, sent his entire treasure, the accumulation of numberless generations in which nothing had been lost, to a safe place of concealment. The slaves who carried it were killed, and no torture availed to make his successor reveal where it was hidden; the gold and emeralds of the last independent ruler of the Sabana are still awaiting discovery. So, for that matter, are the treasures of Cajica and Tundama and Gachetá, and that part of the riches of Tunja which the people were able to save, and the fortune of the last cacique of Chía, and all the movable treasure of the Prince and nobles of Sogamoso.

The Muysca strain has not been lost. It persists, more or less diluted, in the greater part of the people who live in Cundinamarca and Boyacá today. The peons and campesinos of the Tunja region, small and wiry, with the high cheekbones, slanting eyes and wide mouths of the Indian, are very near the pure Chibcha type. They have forgotten Súa and Chiminigagua, and would be surprised to know the origin of familiar village names: Gachetá and Chocontá, Zipaquirá and Usmé, Pasca and Bogotá itself mean nothing beyond the market, the church and the courts. Tequendama is only a waterfall and the rainbow cursed by Chibchacum no longer spells awe and terror. But as long as there is a Colombia it will hold deep in the blood of its people something of the faiths, strengths, defects and beliefs of the children of the Sun.

CHAPTER IX

The Yoke of Peace

DON GONZALO JIMÉNEZ lived to see the twelve sapling and straw houses he had built in the shadow of the peaks grow to a town of substance. Thirty years after Fray Domingo de las Casas—cousin of the great “Apostle to the Indians”—said the first mass that consecrated Santa Fe to the glory of God and His Catholic Majesty Charles V, there were seven hundred Spanish inhabitants, several churches, a college of arts and grammar, a hospital, and even a pharmacy—all this half a century before the Pilgrim Fathers landed at Plymouth.

The rule of Spain lasted for three centuries. Germán Arciniegas, a provocative man, says that Bogotá has no history—it has only annals for the exclusive use of poets and, it may be, cynics. The reference is to colonial Santa Fe, where life flowed evenly as it did in our own South, patriarchal and royalist, and the unvexed aristocracy pursued its established ways in rustic elegance, serene and circumscribed.

Isolated in the interior of a far and little-known continent, the colony was thrown on its own resources, which as far as amusement went were considerable. It has yet to be proved that the generations who made their own pleasures got less fun out of them than the present one with its professional merry-making on a cash basis; the Santaferenos managed very well in their “eagle’s nest.” There were routs and parties at the drop of a plumed hat: receptions for arriving and departing Viceroy, the investiture of an Archbishop, *despedidas* to travelers (who “ere they depart share a bounteous time” even today), birthdays, anniversaries, commemorations, honored guests—

almost anything served as an excuse. Religious festivals were a combination of ornate piety and a good time for all, and Santa Fe observed the calendar with enthusiasm.

There was, for instance, the fiesta of Our Lady of the Rock.

On the day of St. Lawrence Martyr, 1685, one Bernadino de León was in the mountains behind the city engaged in the perennially hopeful and consistently disappointing search for the treasure of the Zipa. He had climbed almost to the crest of Guadalupe, when high in the cliff he discovered the figures of the Virgin with the Child in her arms, accompanied by the Patriarch and the Guardian Angel. Muttering prayers and thanksgiving, he hurried to announce the divine apparition; prelates and populace toiled up the crags to verify and worship. For thirty years the holy images were adored *in situ* where the ruins of "Las Tapias de Pilatos" are today; later, with infinite labor, civic rejoicing and the help of a special miracle, they were brought to the new-built church that still stands, white and lonely, above Bogotá. The feast of La Peña (the Rock) lasted from the Sunday before Lent till Ash Wednesday, when Carnival was at its riotous height; "obscurity, chicha, and gallantry combined to provoke fights and fondness," says Daniel Samper, of which the net results were "two or three dead, a number of wounded, and with time a notable increase in the population."

Weddings were, of course, gala affairs, but funerals too were Occasions. In the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries first sorrow was ostentatious and social nearly everywhere. Santa Fe liked Orations, admirably composed of praise and pathos, expressed in wingèd numbers that left no adjective unturned. Professional masters of posthumous adulation were in demand; their ringing phrases, "grave and majestic, but of vague and uncertain import," could be obtained at so much a phrase. Samper quotes one of these who was called on to honor a shoemaker. The man of words felt that the subject was beneath his dignity, but he needed the money; his discourse was an extempore masterpiece.

"An anointed of the Lord departs," he declaimed sonorously, "and the bells of the temples rend the air with their lugubrious music. A statesman descends into the sepulcher, and the country mourns, for it has lost an able captain of the ship of state in its

uncertain peregrinations. A warrior sleeps his eternal sleep, and the thunderous cannon speak of his high exploits. A modest virgin expires, and one hears the angelical chorus which accompanies her translation to the abodes of bliss." Pause. "A low fellow dies, and they pay me four pesos to come to this tribune and deliver a panegyric against the dictates of the heart!"

There were bullfights and horse races, some of them improvised when the young bloods dashed down the Calle Real to try the animals offered for sale in the Plaza. There was hunting (in the early days, a kind of deer-sticking, which sounds a fairly active sport for those terrains), and there were interminable banquets. An English visitor wrote of offering an elegant breakfast to Santa Fe society that was most successful: the guest of honor tore himself away at 7:00 P.M., but the others stayed on and enjoyed themselves. Toward the end of the eighteenth century there were *tertulias*.

The *tertulias*—literary salons where poetry, always a copious product in Bogotá, was turned out hot from the press of creation and contraband books were eagerly discussed—were peculiarly Santaferena. They came into being when the seething spirit of the encyclopedists and the French revolution percolated to the New Granadan highlands, and continued all through the stormy nineteenth century. (There was even a twentieth century *tertulia*, "La Gruta Simbólica," which translates oddly as the Symbolic Cavern, a gay and brilliant group that took literature seriously and its raw material with insouciance.) Some were famous, and had special names; all of them contributed largely to the intellectual unrest that produced the movement for independence. The lofty drawing rooms, heavy with carved furniture from Spain and velvet hangings, lit with candles in elaborate chandeliers brought from Europe at untold cost and risk of breakage, and provided, according to old records, with objects attractively described as spitting mats, echoed with politico-literary fireworks.

The first break in the tranquil centuries came in 1781, when there was an insurrection, Indian in character, caused by new taxation. The so-called "comunero revolt" started in the provinces north of Santa Fe, and as it spread, the Santaferenos were

terrified to learn that an army of more than 6,000 peasants was marching on the city. Since the total armed forces at the disposal of the Government consisted of twenty ornamental but quite ineffectual guards, matters looked black indeed. A scratch body of troops moved to meet the rebels, and having done so, immediately laid down their arms. The junta of Santa Fe hastily repealed the tax laws; a Commission, including the Archbishop, went out to parley near Nemocón. Capitulations in which the *comunero* demands were fully satisfied were signed and sealed; a high Mass was said in Zipaquirá to solemnize the accord. The rebels disbanded and went quietly home.

It was too good to be true. The ink was hardly dry before the authorities repudiated their promises; troops were sent from Cartagena and savage retribution was visited on the hapless peasants. And so, in the words of Henao and Arrubla, "The terror caused in the villages by such display of death and the visit of the Archbishop to the north resulted in complete pacification." The insurrection had nothing to do with the "aristocratic" movement for independence, yet it was the forerunner of a hundred years of bloodshed and unrest.

Santa Fe of the colony was not spared all the ills common to mankind, but until the comuneros, excitement had been agreeably limited to local scandals, and the somber side of life to those disasters curiously known as acts of God.

In 1633 there had been the epidemic known as "the plague of Santos Gil" because so many people died having no heirs left to survive them and willed their money to Gil, the public writer—a testimony both to his ability and to the illiteracy of the Santaferenses that makes one wonder if he wrote the testaments of his unwitting clients uncontrolled. There was the Time of the Great Noise, in 1687, when the city was terror-struck by a furious subterranean cannonade that seemed to announce the end of the world. There was the fire at Santo Domingo, when the firemen were drunk and pious ladies put out the blaze with water carried in their hats, and that other disastrous one that burned for twelve days, destroying the Viceroy's Palace and with it archives that can never be replaced.

There was the sudden expulsion of the Jesuits by Charles III. The decree was a secret known to only one man, the King's

representative, until the hour when the soldiers went at midnight to carry out the order; yet they found the priests packed and ready, their treasure—including the fabulous Monstrance of gold and emeralds and precious stones—vanished into thin air. The Monstrance materialized again when the Jesuits were allowed to return; when the Republic cast them out, it once more took on invisibility, only to reappear punctually with the reappearance of the Order. It is now hidden from the public, variously reported as in a bank vault or entrusted to some safe person, and is fast becoming a legend.

The whole history of Colombia seems to be exemplified by individuals, so that the lives and character of certain men are the lenses through which a period, a movement or an event is reduced to clear proportions that can be grasped, as it were, all at one time. Quesada and Belalcázar typify the Conquest, though men like Sanmartín, Robledo, Lázaro Fonte, Ursúa, Badillo, Aldana and a score of others might do it equally well but for the accidents of rank or fortune. The Viceroy de Solís is the prototype of the best in colonial times: capable, worldly, and scandalous in office; a saint as a Franciscan friar, the apotheosis of the religious preoccupation of the period.

Don José de Solís y Folch de Cardona, son of the Duke of Montellano, was descended from the Borja family that flowered in Italy as Borgia. He came to Santa Fe in 1756, and for six years ruled the colony with unusual ability and liberalism. Santafereno society was delighted with his official conduct and scandalized by his private morals; he was gay and brilliant and a lover of women, and his affair with María Lugarda de Ospina kept every salon in a state of pleasurable outrage. A portrait shows a very gallant gentleman indeed, slim and handsome, with a fine clever face that manages to dominate the gorgeous clothes stiff with gold embroidery.

In 1762 the Viceroy don José de Solís y Folch de Cardona became overnight Friar José de Jesús María, the follower in love and humility of the gentle Saint of Assisi. Instead of gossip, the alcoves rang with tales of piety and good deeds: the time his boatmen were ill and he cooked and cared for them as a son, his gentleness with the poor and sick, his order to sell his estate "which is not mine but of the poor," his gift of the splendid

emerald known as "the Orphan" to the Madonna of Chiquinquirá, his tenderness to all in trouble and want. Holy Week, 1770, was cold and wet; like others of his order, Fray José—now Guardian of the Convento Máximo—went barefoot through the lengthy ceremonies. The result was pneumonia; twelve days later, on April twenty-seventh, "he received with great devotion the Holy Sacraments and died with quietness and serenity."

The number of the sons and daughters of good family who renounced the world for the cloister was astonishing, and although not all were like the Padillos, who declared that they "had and procreated as legitimate children" five reverend fathers and four holy nuns, most of the respected names of Santa Fe could be found in the rosters of the many convents of the city. The daughters of the colony who did not take the veil were educated in the strictest submission, though not, of course, in any branch of learning; they married the men their fathers selected, and lived in devoted and dependent security ever after. Or at least most of them did. Enough has come down about the more sprightly females of the period to make clear the dictum of the simpático author of *El Carnero de Bogotá*—a title that can only be translated *The Bogotá Kid*—who remarked, "It is a perilous thing to have a beautiful wife, and very annoying to have an ugly one."

The story of Bogotá arranges itself neatly under headings: Discovery and Conquest, the Colony, the Liberation, the Unquiet Years, Modern. There is a special subhead that covers the time from 1780 to 1810, which might be called "Awakening." It was the period of the *Espedición Botánica*.

There is nothing at first glance to rouse one in a botanical expedition. It has a Victorian ring to it, suggesting a group of young ladies under the guidance of a droop-whiskered, tight-trousered professor engaged in a genteel day with nature. Actually, the *Espedición* was an achievement of the first magnitude, which earned the admiration of scientists all over the world. It was organized in 1783 by the Archbishop of Bogotá under the leadership of José Celestino Mutis, a savant of European reputation, who had come to Santa Fe with the Viceroy Messia de la Zerda, successor to Solís.

The *Espedición* worked for more than twenty-five years, first at Mariquita, and then in Santa Fe. It accumulated a library of six thousand volumes, an herbarium of more than 20,000 plants, a nursery, a collection of samples of domestic products, a series of paintings of Colombian fauna, and more than three thousand carefully colored botanical plates, which made Humboldt's mouth water when he saw them. In addition to classifying innumerable plants, it studied geodetics, geography and zoology, and founded the Observatory. The staff was a research director's dream. Among them was Zea, who, sent to Spain a prisoner charged with revolutionary activity, had his head judged more useful to the empire on his shoulders than in a basket, and became director of the Jardín Botánico of Madrid. Another disciple of Mutis was the brilliant *Payanés*, Francisco José de Caldas, who discovered the method of determining altitude by the temperature at which water boils. His work was cut short when in 1816, during Morillo's reign of terror in Bogotá, the Spanish general ordered his execution, dismissing the incalculable loss to science with the notorious "Spain has no need of savants." Later generations disagreed with Morillo; in 1925, King Alfonso unveiled a tablet in Madrid that reads: "Perpetual atonement to the memory of the immortal New Granadan José de Caldas."

Morillo confiscated the books and papers of the *Espedición* and sent them to Madrid, where they are now. But he could not destroy the spirit that gave it life. Those last two decades of the eighteenth century showed a really tropical growth of ideas in the previously dormant soil of Santa Fe. Books were smuggled in that had all the flavor of contraband to intensify their message, and the tertulias took on the character of torchbearers. Without plan, almost without consciousness, the revolution was maturing.

CHAPTER X

America for the Americans

THE MAN WHO, more than Bolívar, more than Santander, typifies Colombian independence is Antonio Nariño, known as the Precursor. Bolívar was the flaming genius of whom Morillo said, "He is the revolution," but he was a universal hero; Ecuador, Perú, Bolivia and Colombia can claim him equally with his native Venezuela. Santander, who later forged a nation from a scattered colony adrift in new-found liberty, was a child of three when Nariño lit the first uncertain flame of rebellion with the publication of a translation of the *Rights of Man*.

The history of Colombia's ten-year struggle for independence cannot be told here. All the alternating fortunes, the heroism, triumph and defeat, the dissensions and jealousies, the splendid daring and dogged endurance of that extraordinary decade have been written and rewritten. Infinitely more complex than our own Revolution, by reason of the terrain, of the vast extent covered in often inconclusive operations, and of the fact that what are now five separate countries were involved together, it can only be condensed to the limits of a single volume by the most rigorous selection, and to attempt to reduce it to a few pages is out of the question. But in Colombia, even more than in most countries, individuals have molded events, and if, as Carlyle said, "history is the essence of innumerable biographies," that definition is never more true than in the countries below the Río Grande. Nariño, a Colombian, a Bogotano, wealthy, well born and intellectual, was everything most representative of the place, the times and the unquiet spirit of revolt.

The rising against Spain was essentially aristocratic and

intellectual. There was no upheaval of the proletarian masses; it was not Demos, huge and inarticulate, stirred to slow violence. Freedom was the work of the men of the tertulias, the upper-class Creoles, who conducted a revolution *de minoría*.

Antonio Nariño was an exporter of quinine, tobacco, cacao and hides, and held the post of treasurer of tithes; between the two he was well able to keep "a sumptuous house" in Santa Fe and smuggle in a library no Audiencia would have countenanced. His tertulia was frequented by the men of the Expedición Botánica and other leaders of the New Granadan renaissance, and the discussions ranged far from the safe pastures of unquestioning loyalty to a rule that became increasingly onerous as colonial initiative developed.

In 1794, with a kind of impudent daring that invited reprisals, Nariño set off a bomb in the shape of a Spanish rendering of the *Rights of Man*. Retribution was swift and remarkably thorough. The Viceroy hurried back and clapped him in prison, the Real Audiencia and the Inquisition moved in ponderous outrage. Nariño was sentenced to ten years in an African jail. His property was confiscated: his farms and houses, stock and implements, the goods prepared for export and those in transit, the credits shown on his books and all moneys that might eventually accrue. His brother-in-law and defender, Ricaurte, was condemned to life imprisonment in Cartagena, where he died eight years later.

At first glance it would seem that the Inquisition had left nothing to chance, since it was unlikely that Nariño, even if he survived the African prison, would come out in a condition to be dangerous. But it is impossible to foresee everything, particularly in the case of a young man with the phoenixlike quality of a serial hero. Nariño escaped from his prison ship in the harbor of Cádiz, lay in hiding, got over the border into France, and some months later turned up in London to dicker with calm effrontery in the office of the Foreign Secretary. The proposition was British help for the insurgents in exchange for special commercial privileges; after a modest counteroffer—that Nariño should turn over New Granada to England—it was agreed. In 1797 Nariño worked his way back to Santa Fe disguised as a monk.

It was impossible for so prominent and passionate a revolutionary to remain long hidden in a secluded community which to all effects was limited to a few thousand people. The authorities got wind of his presence, and he was induced to give himself up. Back he went to the *calabozo*, to spend the next six years in solitary confinement "while the courts in Madrid debated whether or no to respect the promises of the Viceroy and the Archbishop to treat him with consideration." In 1803, he was released, apparently dying of tuberculosis, to end his days on a farm in the Sabana. It probably tickled his puckish humor to think that the Audiencia had been again *burlada*: he did not die, though he came very near to starving.

Nariño had already had as much excitement, misfortune and adventure as would seem possible in one mortal span, but it was only the beginning. In 1809 word came of a rising in Quito, and the first simmerings began to bubble dangerously in Santa Fe. The Audiencia immediately jailed Nariño on general principles. Irrepressible as ever, he escaped to Santa Marta, but the long arm of Spain reached down to the distant port to seize him, and he was sent in chains to Cartagena, where he remained in the dungeons of Bocachica until the revolt of the city set him free. His next stay in his native city was not in the by-now-familiar jails; in 1811 he was named President of Cundinamarca.

The capital had thrown off the Spanish yoke the year before, almost by mistake. The Creoles had not risen against the Crown, but against the odious Bonaparte usurper; it was a legitimist movement together with one for equal rights. They formed their Junta and expelled the Viceroy to the cry of Ferdinand VII and Castille. Under Nariño's guidance the 1812 constitution with great skill avoided all mention of Ferdinand, monarchy and so forth, but it was not until July sixteenth, 1813, that he was able to secure a definite Declaration of Independence.

The Colony stood at last on its own feet, but unfortunately one was a federalist foot and one was a centralist, and the left (which favored more or less separate city-states) did not know what the right (which believed in uniting them under central control) was up to. This deplorable mismatching was the cause of most of the shocks and turmoil of the next decades; the

country reeled toward stability, tripping itself up at every turn, earning in those first days from its ironic sons the name of *Patria Boba*—the dumb fatherland.

Nariño's two years of office were characteristically combative. A Centralist to the bone, he began by ousting his old friend Lozano, the zoologist of the *Espedición Botánica*; endless wordy battles on the vexed question of political systems gave place on two occasions to armed conflict with Tunja. The latter city, as headquarters of the recently organized United Provinces of New Granada (a federalist league that included most of the Granadan states, each of which was sovereign within its own boundaries) represented a majority opinion to which Cundinamarca refused to conform. Twice Santa Fe was unsuccessful in military efforts at persuasion, but in 1813 she defeated the attacking Federalists at the outskirts of the city. A truce was patched, and both contenders joined in sending an expedition against the Spaniards in Cauca. Nariño resigned as dictator—original as always—leaving the government of Cundinamarca to that Alvarez (the "Bantam Rooster") whose unstable highhandedness later resulted in Bolívar's taking Santa Fe for Tunja, and went to lead united rebel forces in Popayán and Pasto.

The southern campaign was the soon-familiar story of terrible marches and battles of "soldados sin coraza" against well-equipped superior forces, of hunger and fever and indomitable courage. The expedition reached Popayán "half-naked, barefoot and exhausted," but victorious, and when they took up the march again to the South, success seemed assured in spite of the rigors and dangers of the way. But the Pastusos are a rugged, unyielding people, and Pasto had not seen the light; it was ferociously royalist then as later when freedom was forced upon it only with the greatest difficulty. There is an acrid humor in the history of those constant campaigns against the obstinate monarchists of the South, with the patriots grimly determined to give them liberty or give them death. Nariño's expedition failed when success was actually in sight in the valley below, and he began again his series of prisons. Thirteen months in a Pasto dungeon were followed by brief sojourns in Quito and Callao; from there in bonds he was taken around

Cape Horn to Cádiz, and this time there was no escape. For four years he lay in solitary confinement, "naked" as he told the Congress long afterwards, "with only the left-overs of the infirmary for food and no news of my family."

While he was held in living death, Santa Fe went through its darkest hour. In 1816 every hard-won achievement of the Creoles had been wiped out in blood: Cartagena had fallen after a siege so terrible it sickens even now in indifferent print; Bolívar had taken refuge in Jamaica, a tragic failure; the provinces had been reconquered by the army sent from Spain; Bogotá was under the reign of terror of Morillo.

General Pablo Morillo was called the Pacifier—evidently in the sense that the Conquistadores were pacifiers of resisting Indians. He came preceded by promises to forget the past in fraternal amity, and remained to order wholesale executions, often with refinements of brutality like the quartering of Carabáño and the exhibition of patriot heads in slow disintegration. The list of those who died in the orchard called now the Place of Martyrs reads like a tragic *Who's Who*: Villavicencio, Lozano, Valenzuela, Miguel de Pombo, Gutiérrez, were among the first; Camilo Torres, "spokesman of the revolution," was killed soon after, and his head exposed to the buzzards for nine days on a pike, while his family was stripped of every possession down to his wife's thimble. Caldas soon followed him; Arrubla, Valencia, Torices, Mejía—the roll is long indeed. Those who escaped death were sent to forced labor and reduced to penury. In the provinces Morillo's lieutenants imitated him faithfully, and thought up special features of their own.

If Morillo killed with his savagery any hope of winning the colony back to Spain, his successor Sámano dug its grave and buried it. A disgusting old man whose senile cruelty caused the Real Audiencia to state "a love of terrorism devours him, and denied the art of winning the human heart, he employs only harshness," he goaded the Creoles beyond any possibility of reconciliation; the Audiencia's report concluded, with a clear objectiveness that compels admiration: "The Kingdom of New Granada is on its way to extermination."

The only free bit of Colombia was the remote Casanare, where Santander and his elusive horsemen defied Spain in the

plains beyond the Cordillera. Barreira, a handsome young colonel recently out from Madrid, tried to come to grips with them with the newly reorganized army of Santa Fe; but it was a war with ghosts. The llaneros, wild plainsmen scantily clothed in shreds of skins, palm leaves or bark, their bare legs hugging the crude wooden saddles of their half-tamed ponies, armed with a hodge-podge of stolen rifles, spears and wooden lances, harried the marching troops, but they could never be pinned down to battle. When Barreira reached what should have been their rallying place, they were invisible, and when he planned to corner them they were somewhere else. The Spaniards climbed back over the mountains empty and frustrated, and Cundinamarca took heart in secret.

This was in April 1819. In May, Bolívar started on his prodigious march from Mantecal to the Sabana. Two squadrons of horse and four battalions of infantry (one of them the famous British Legion), accompanied by an undetermined number of women followers, floundered and strained across the flooded llanos. At Tame, Santander joined them with an equal force and together, some 3,200 strong, they faced the horrors of the Cordillera—in winter, with troops unused to mountains, by a back trail considered impassable at the rainy season. Twelve hundred scarecrows, half dead from exhaustion, cold and hunger, dragged themselves over the 10,000-foot Páramo of Pisba to reach Paya on June twenty-seventh, without horses, ammunition or supplies; the rest had been left along the way. Yet they took Paya. Refreshed and reinforced, they took Gámeza; they held the Vargas swamp and forced the Spanish to retire to Paipa; with the raw troops assembled by somewhat drastic conscription (every man between fifteen and forty to present himself within twenty-four hours on pain of death), they circled the Spanish army and occupied Tunja.

It is odd to read of Barreiro's forces marching off in full view of the patriot army watching eagerly to see which road they would take, though no odder than Duane's account of the battle of Valencia, where "even the inhabitants who came as spectators were persuaded to assemble and form a line . . . with the assurance that their presence was all that would be required." But neither army had any weapons that were effective beyond

three hundred yards; so long as they stayed a quarter of a mile apart they were perfectly innocuous.

One month after the "moribund army," in Santander's phrase, reached Socha, the insurgents won the battle of Boyacá and in effect freed Colombia from Spain. The Spaniards fled from Santa Fe, the unpleasant Sámano conspicuously disguised "in a large green poncho and large hat of red oilcloth"; Bolívar and his followers entered the city in a tempest of rejoicing. The King's representatives had been viciously cruel, but it must be admitted that the Creoles were not particularly forbearing; as soon as Bolívar left Bogotá, Santander executed the hapless Barreiro and thirty-six other prisoners of war. With his usual perspicacity the Liberator remarked, "No doubt our reputations will suffer."

New Granada had ceased to be and Great Colombia had been born, before the Liberator and the Precursor met face to face. The encounter took place in a little village in western Venezuela, where Bolívar was waiting for peace proposals from Spain; Nariño, broken in health but unquenched in spirit, was on his way back to his beloved Santa Fe. For the last time the worn forerunner of liberation was caught up into the stream of events; appointed provisional Vice-President of Great Colombia, he went on to convene the first Constituent Congress in San Rosario de Cúcuta. The delegates assembled on May sixth, 1821, and for Nariño, the moment of triumph was saddened by the thought of all the gallant companions dead in battle, in hardship, in the glorious humiliation of the gallows.

Santander, however, was very much alive, and if anything more federalist than ever. The eternal dissension as to the complexion of the new government smoldered as always, and the delegates leaned to the federal side; Santander was elected Executive Vice-President of one-time New Granada almost unanimously. Nariño, in whose thin body the fires now burned low, went on over the trails to Bogotá. His last public appearance was two years later, and it does not make a pretty tale.

In 1823 Congress assembled in Bogotá, and the Precursor, now a Senator, was attacked there by his political enemies with a vulgar violence that no ideological differences can excuse. He was accused of malversion, of treason (because of his sur-

render at Pasto) and—crowning irony—of failing to fulfil the requirements of residence. Nariño stood to answer; trembling with indignation and the scarce-healed wounds of the Spanish leg-irons, he shamed his adversaries and roused the Senate to acclaim. Before the year was out he died in Leiva, sitting in the stout leather chair that the Jesuits keep now at San Bartolomé, “a man of considerable patience, resignation, obedience and humility” who “was greatly troubled when treated with deference,” and who lit a flame that brought a nation into being.

CHAPTER XI

The Faithful Enemy

BOLÍVAR FREED COLOMBIA from the yoke of Spain, Santander made it a nation. One is the adored of half a continent, the other is the guiding hero of a country that bore him, followed him, cast him out in shame and summoned him again to govern it in its hour of need. He was revered and execrated, yet even his enemies respected him; he died full of honor in the arms of the Archbishop of Bogotá, and his passing was mourned as a national disaster.

Francisco de Paula Santander was born in April 1792 on an hacienda just outside Cúcuta, in a small manor house whose rebuilt roofs can be seen over the hedge of flowering trees that separates it from the road to the frontier; after a life of heroism, hardship and notable accomplishment he ended his unquiet days in Bogotá in 1840. He served Bolívar magnificently and opposed him violently; he was called, with reason, the Man of Laws, but he instigated disorder in a time when peace was desperately needed; his memory is fragrant with unselfish devotion to a noble cause, yet there still clings to him the taint of treachery; he was banished in disgrace and recalled to be President of the Republic.

A medallion of the period shows a thin, intent profile, wide-browed and slightly frowning, with the small, obstinate mouth of the nervous *volontaire*, a long nose and a disproportionately delicate chin. (Incidentally, if portraits are to be trusted, at least four of the great leaders of the Revolution had these dominating noses—Bolívar, Sucre, Santander and Sanmartín.) The artist caught something beyond contour and feature when

he modeled the plaque; I do not think it is because one now knows the life of Santander that the whole expression speaks of a kind of preoccupied concern with an intransigent ideal. Most of Colombia's troubles can be traced to the readiness of her sons to sacrifice themselves, past gains and present expediencies for a militant idea; it is hard to find a really ignoble motive even in the most reckless caudillo of the uneasy nineteenth century. Santander was ridden all his life by convictions that never deviated, and it was this unconceding consistency that was both his glory and his misfortune.

Bolívar dreamed a vast, firmly knit republic embracing the whole of the northwestern part of the continent, with a strongly centralized government of despotic cast ("pure representative government is not suited to our character, customs and present conditions . . ."), a life-term Presidency and a hereditary Senate. Santander believed in a separate Colombia, with a definitely democratic government on loose federal lines. It was the contrast in these two ideologies that was the basis of the antagonism between the two patriots; the seeds were sown when they first met, although the tragic flowering only came fifteen years later. It was a contrast between two political principles; it was also the contrast between inspired genius and hard-headed administrative ability, between superb vision and practical clear-sightedness, between a man of fantastic and peculiar magnetism and one of solid, unspectacular competence. They were made to complement each other, and it is not too much to say that their conflict robbed the country they both adored of half a century of progress.

In 1812 Simon Bolívar was an almost unknown and somewhat discredited revolutionary, sunk in the oblivion that waits for unsuccessful agitators. In 1813, entrusted by Cartagena with a cautiously limited mission on the lower Magdalena, he exceeded his orders with triumphant indiscipline and followed his unauthorized triumphs along the river with the first of his extraordinary mountain marches and the defeat of the Spanish at Cúcuta. Occupying the city in the name of the insurgents, he demanded authority to take the war over the frontier into Venezuela.

At that time Colonel Manuel de Castillo held Pamplona, in

the mountains behind Cúcuta, under the orders of Tunja; Santander, not yet twenty-one, was his second in command. Both were bitterly against the plan to send New Granadan troops on what they considered a foreign adventure. When the Congress, filled with grateful enthusiasm and rosy hopes, gave the enterprise its blessing, Bolívar, newly created brigadier and honorary citizen of New Granada, ordered the two Colombians to lead their men across the border against the Royalist forces entrenched along the road to Mérida. Resentful but efficient, they obeyed; the Spanish were defeated at La Grita and driven eastward in retreat. Castillo, resigning his commission, went back to Tunja with a festering rancor in his heart that years later spelt ruin and death; Santander returned to attempt the defense of Cúcuta.

It was the inauspicious beginning of a relationship that was to give many years of loyal collaboration before it ended in tragedy. While the fortunes of Bolívar and the patriot cause fluctuated wildly—a graph of them during that period would pale a profile of the Andes—Santander was unflagging; he organized and carried on successfully the fight in the llanos of the Casanare; he was with Páez at that untamed llanero leader's first encounter with Bolívar, and with them fought the savage battle of Calabozo; he was Bolívar's emissary to drum up delegates to the Congress of Angostura at the cost of a slight glazing of the truth. When the Liberator crossed the flooded plains in the calculated madness of his terrible march to the Sabana, Santander was waiting for him at Tame, where the Andes begin. The Cucutano and his men were in the van of that nightmare expedition; it was he who stormed the Pass of Paya when the haggard survivors reached the top—1,200 men out of the 3,200 who had faced the Cordillera; he was magnificent at Gámeza and La Balsa, and if the strategy of Boyacá was Bolívar's, the successful execution of it in the face of tremendous odds was largely Santander's.

The battle of Puente de Boyacá, which gave New Granada to the revolutionaries, was fought on August seventh, 1819. From then until 1828, when an escort of soldiers put him aboard a boat outward bound from Cartagena instead of hanging him to a gallows in the square of Bogotá, Francisco de Paula San-

tander governed Colombia, with the title of Vice-President. He was just twenty-eight years old when he assumed office, a seasoned veteran of innumerable campaigns.

Santander was a model executive, but he was a great deal more than that. He organized the country and gave it a legal framework—not merely a collection of statutes, but a sustaining juridical structure around which to build the nation as the human body is built on a skeleton. He founded schools and colleges, decentralizing education and laying the permanent foundation of a system that is flowering today; somehow, he contrived to establish a system of finance. These things were not reforms, they were creations; they were not adaptations of existing institutions, because there were no liberal, free institutions to be adapted. What this young man—whose entire adult life until then had been passed in primitive warfare—proposed was to turn the newborn nation, wracked with ten years of bitter struggle, into a State.

On Santander, left in Bogotá while the expedition to the South carried the fight for independence through Popayán to Ecuador and from Ecuador to Perú, there fell the burden of providing reinforcements, money and supplies for the distant army of liberation. He did it, by miracles of tenacity and organizing ability that triumphed over lack of funds, disorder, jealousies, doubts and the physical obstacles of roadless distance and rugged terrain. But when Bolívar, worn to a flame in a pain-wrung bony envelope, was on the verge of completing the conquest of Perú—the crowning achievement of a stupendous enterprise—the long arm of Santander's hostility reached down across the Andes to dim this final glory. Bolívar was removed from his position as commander in chief of the armies, and Sucre made generalissimo in his stead; he could plan the last triumphant engagements, but he could not participate in them. And when the Dictator of Perú returned to Bogotá in 1826, his first reception was a languid shadow of the usual delirious welcomes.

It was this title of Dictator that convinced Santander that his darkest suspicions were only too well founded. It was because Bolívar had accepted it in Lima that the Colombian Congress, spurred by the Vice-President, had revoked his rank.

The Liberator's political theories were already suspect to one who saw in any form of despotism, however noble, the specter of permanent absolute rule, and his scheme for a huge, multi-national union seemed to the Colombian dangerous and (what to a man like Santander was even worse) unworkable. The somewhat gloomy note of Santander's speech to the Constituent Congress (where, in a brilliant and statesmanlike oration, Bolívar had expressly declared against dictatorship for himself or anyone else) when assuming the Vice-Presidency had been all too true:

"Sir, your confidence is greater than my hopes. You have given me the helm of a ship which, though sheltered from the storm of civil strife, is still floating between the reefs of war and politics."

It was an understatement.

No doubt Bolívar's flamboyant charm, his studied and often gaudy effects, his instant flaunting dominance wherever he appeared, were not exactly down the self-contained Santander's alley. A vague emotional distrust, mixed with envy, had become more acute as the memory of that other Bolívar, the astute, indomitable, whalebone-and-whitleather comrade-in-arms, faded with distance and five long years of absence. When the Liberator combined personal supremacy with political victory, and accepted the dictatorship of Colombia from the stormy Ocaña Congress (a knock-down and drag-out fight between Bolivarians and Santanderists that he had not even troubled to attend) it was the last straw, and the Vice-President toyed with the idea of using force to prevent his entry into the capital.

The climax came one night in September 1828. Santander, obsessed with the idea that the Dictator planned a monarchy—the Bolivian constitution, embodying Bolívar's political creed, looked remarkably like one—had long given up any attempt to mask his feelings. A year and a half before, Bolívar told General Soublette: "I can no longer endure the perfidious ingratitude of Santander, and I have today written him to write to me no more . . . ;" a letter to which the Vice-President, still hopeful perhaps that some shred of personal relationship could survive, replied: "You are pleased to tell me . . . that you will no longer call me friend. . . . Your letter has not surprised me, since for

over a year my mortal enemies have been striving to remove me from your heart, and now they have succeeded." Prologue to tragedy.

The denouement was swift. There was an attempt to capture or assassinate the weary idol of five nations as he slept, which failed by a miracle, and Bogotá spent a night of uproar during which the Hero who had vanquished the might of Spain hid under a bridge from those who a few years before would have followed him into the mouth of hell. In the morning, Santander, although his complicity was never proved, was arrested together with other suspects, tried and condemned to hang. Bolívar, always curiously free from personal vindictiveness, commuted the sentence to banishment, and for three years the man who had given his whole life to the cause of his country lived abroad under the shadow of dishonor.

After the death of the Liberator, Francisco Santander was recalled. He was President of the Republic from 1832 to 1836—as a matter of fact, his election preceded his return from exile, and news of it reached him in New York—and his term of office began a period of tranquil accomplishment that lasted until his death. Few great men have been so impersonal in power. He was not picturesque; his mature austerity borrowed no drama from youthful excesses, and his grave and considered diligence took added dryness from his need to counteract a too great effervescence in his countrymen. The ready emotionalism of the times, the habit of generally lush expression, the vaulting and inconclusive visions were not for him; Uribe Uribe said that his programs, however ambitious, were composed of "realizable ideas." And always, like a needle to the pole, his will held to the statement in his 1821 proclamation: "Arms have given us Independence; laws will give us freedom."

Naturally inclined to spare clarity of language, Santander was a writer and orator of considerable effect when necessary. By the same token, although he was "a trifle careless as to his clothes, which were of coarse, ordinary native materials," he could be astonishingly resplendent when splendor was in order. When pomp was called for, he dutifully encased his solid body in regimentals of fantastic richness, stiff with gold embroidery and heavy with epaulets and cords. His cavalryman's hands

were thrust into white kid gloves worked with colored silks and metal threads; on his square-set head was a cocked hat redundant with both ostrich plumes and red, blue and yellow coq feathers. Sword, sash, decorations and glittering boots—the total effect must have been baroque to a degree. It is certain, however, that there was nothing rococo about his spiritual style. He had a granite quality that did not crumble in men's minds through a century of unrest, dissension and civil war, and that forty years of peace have not diminished.

It was not really very long ago. The grandsons of men who fought with Bolívar are living today; Páez, the wild llanero who hurled his half-naked centaurs against the Spanish in Venezuela, died in New York in 1873. But already the men of the Liberation are legendary heroes, so that one sees them reflected from the minds of their chroniclers, as in a glass darkly. It is even hard to know exactly what they looked like, for while Hamilton, describing Santander, speaks of his flashing black eyes, others more exactly describe them as small and gray. There are contemporary portraits, however, naïve and emphatic, that give one the feeling of authenticity. One that I like particularly shows him standing at ease, stern and rather self-conscious; his hair swirls over his forehead in the wind-swept bob of the times; he is waving his hat at the audience—more, one feels, as an expected gesture than from any natural ebullition—while a battle rages in the distance.

There are no de Paula Santanders left today, but every town has a statue to the Hombre de las Leyes. This title is not merely because he organized the new nation on a sound judicial basis, but because he inculcated deep in the consciousness of the Colombians a respect for law that persists today. Where law ends, tyranny begins; thanks in great measure to "the lengthened shadow of one man," Colombia enjoys greater freedom, and abuses it less, than almost any other Latin American country. It would be easy to overcomplicate the character of Santander, to seek in a tortuous and involved psychology the explanation for his shift from loyalty to enmity and his combination of prudent, farseeing guidance of the State with reckless provocation of internal conflict. It seems to me, however, that the reasons are rather to be found in a marked simplicity, the

inelastic, stubborn devotion to an ideal that never varied from boyhood till his death. However diversified in talents, his was essentially a one-track mind; molded in youth to certain political ideas, it stuck to them in magnificent and dangerous constancy. It is this undeviating and unshaded fidelity to principles he considered paramount that gives Santander faithfulness at the cost of disloyalty and integrity at the price of betrayal.

He was not beloved, as Sucre was, or worshiped like Bolívar. No historian dwells on his human side, his private loves and joys and heartaches. His intimate life might be almost nonexistent; nothing seems to remain of carefree, passionate impulse or casual comradeship, of gaiety or warmth. But he is admired and respected as few public men have been. Colombians call him the Founder of the Nation.

CHAPTER XII

Land of the Condor

THE ROAD TO TUNJA is lovely in the early morning, when the light is soft and shadows fall long and transparent across the fields. It is very peaceful: little adobe ranchitos dot the valley slopes; slow bullocks lurch docilely along the furrows; burros, their packs swollen with yuca and panela, with miel and chicha and covered bundles whose contents are unrevealed, shuffle delicately beside the highway in the serious, well-intentioned manner of their kind. There are occasional droves of cattle walking the last mile, and hacendados on single-footing ponies, dressed in hairy chaps and a ruana flung carelessly over the shoulder. Peasant women in dark shapeless clothes and straw hats walk single file, the spindle swinging as their busy fingers roll the thread they will later weave at home. Cautious before careering trucks and buses, ox carts hug the edge of the road. Yellow dust rises in thick clouds, to cover carts, cars and travelers with a rusty patina.

This is thickly settled, agricultural land. The small farm-houses are built of dried mud on a cane or sapling frame, topped by heavy thatch roofs. They may consist of a single room, or of two or three or more with a patio or a veranda, but always, however simple, they have flowers. It is remarkable and touching to see how these humble folk whose meager lives are closed between dawn and dark in a laborious monotony, who reckon wealth in minute sums and possessions in the scantiest terms, will spend time and thought on a garden, and fashion baskets to hang from the eaves, filled with ferns and flowers. All over Colombia, ramshackle huts mock poverty with gaudy masses

of bougainvillia and dripping trumpet flowers and trees dusted with bloom; I have seen lovingly tended rose gardens in pioneer farms high in the Sierra, where water had to be carried in jars from distant brooks and the nearest neighbor was two hours of hard riding away.

The Colombians are not considered a naturally artistic people. They have almost none of the colorful handicrafts that are found in Mexico or Guatemala; that universal urge to paint that marks the Ecuadorian Indian stops short at the frontier. It is certain, however, that a great deal could, and should, be done to develop peasant crafts, for people who possess the sensitivity that will make room for beauty even when there is none for comfort can be taught to create it in the things of daily use which are now so grimly drab.

Tunja, the Muysca Hunsa, capital of the Department of Boyacá, has been variously described as a dirty town (Bingham), uninteresting (Grubb), dull, sad, cloudy, cold and goiter-infested (Mollien). Colonel Duane gives a minority opinion of another color; in 1823 he found it a city of spires and edifices, like an amphitheatre, rich, well built and gay. None of these, or other, descriptions prepared me for the reality.

The town spills down the slopes above an open valley, so that the descending streets curve over the brink and disappear, and each eastward vista ends in a far line of bluish peaks seen across space. It is higher than Bogotá—9,250 feet—and the air is sharp and hard as a diamond; one is very near the vast arch of sky, which gives an open, roof-of-the-world feeling that is somehow exhilarating. Everything is sharply etched in the clear light, angular and definite, unsoftened by the indeterminate contours of trees and gardens. Behind the city the bare mountains lie like sleeping animals, in long tawny rises.

No wonder this was the country Súa, the Sun-god, chose for his own. There are times, during the wet season, when Tunja is blurred in mist or flattened to featurelessness under cold, driving rain. Do not go then. Tunja must be seen in summer, golden and clean-cut under a cobalt sky.

Before the Spaniards came to destroy the Chibchas to the greater glory of God, the Zaque of Hunsa was second only to the Zipa of Bacatá, paramount prince of Cundinamarca. The

Hunsa—chiefs were identified with their realms—refused to bow to another prince; proud and powerful, he stood squarely across the path of the Zipa's scheme to unite all the tribes in one strong nation. The Conquistadores found them still rival states, nursing their wounds from the last indecisive battle in which the great Zipa Nemequene was cut down while the Hunsa retired, arrogant and undefeated, to his sun-bathed heights.

Some say that this last prince was Garanchacha, the cruel child of the Sun, who was born to a princess of Guachetá in the form of a flawless emerald, and who killed the Zaque of Ramiriquí to usurp his throne and later rule in pitiless splendor at Hunsa. He built the temple of Súa, raising each column over the body of a sacrificed slave, and the people trembled under his tyranny while they adored his heavenly origin. Fray Simón says, "These people had a devil whom they called Garanchacha"—apparently a natural error. (Historically, it would seem that the name of the last Lord of Hunsa was Quemuenchatocha.) But the Zaque, too, had the dreams of disaster that tormented his rival Bacatá. When messengers, sent to the coast to bring back pearls, reported the arrival of strange beings whose clothes were like white gold, whose faces were pale and hairy, and whose hands sped noisy death, he knew that his vision had come true.

Calling his subjects together, he told them that the evil days were upon them. The Chibchas would be destroyed, and their holy places with them; he, Son of Súa, had dreamed it. Against revealed destiny there is no defense; the Hunsa withdrew into his inner court and the people saw him no more. When Quesada burst open the heavy door, he found him there, sitting quiet on his golden throne, waiting.

Enough has been preserved in the writings of the Conquest to make it easy to imagine the city of the Zaque as it was in that other age. The streets, traced at right angles, were lined with houses built of saplings and straw, and with high stockades; from the eaves of the temples thin gold plates dangled and gave back the sun. The palace was enormous, with outer, middle and inner courts, and quarters where two hundred concubines, chosen from the fairest women of Boyacá, lived in royal se-

clusion. Before the houses of the nobles bright pennants whipped in the chill wind from slender poles. In the streets there was movement: men and women in long smocks with hair bound in coarse nets, and nobles in painted cotton, their ears and noses weighted down with heavy gold ornaments, gold pins fastening their mantles, necklaces and breastplates gleaming yellow; there were priests in long scarlet robes, the serpent of Bachúe coiled above their brows. When the Zaque's golden litter came swaying above the crowd, surrounded by courtiers, there was a great tossing of red and blue and orange plumes; from the threshold of some debtor's house the accusing jaguar, chained there by law until the debt was paid, snarled at the color and music.

Every four days a market was held in Hunsá, and the square was filled with buyers and sellers. All the goods of Chibcha life were spread out: cotton cloth, painted and plain, and dye tints for decorating it; tobacco (the Muyscas called it *hosca*, and the pipe for smoking it, *tabaco*); chicha and palm wine; *barbasco* for fish poison; *cabuya* for ropes and cord; calabashes and gourds. There were fruits—*sapotas*, *curubas*, pineapples, berries, *aguacates* and the little wild strawberries of the mountains; vegetables such as yuca and arracacha and potatoes. There were spices and oils, and of course maize—the chief foodstuff of the Chibchas and the source of chicha. The Muyscas knew nothing of livestock, but in some corner parrots, suitable offerings for the gods in lieu of human sacrifice, were bartered to the pious. Even the nobles and caciques came to bargain and keep an eye on their affairs.

There was a day when Hernán Pérez de Quesada, brother of the General, being left in command in New Granada while the Discoverer went to Spain, told the Zaque "that he desired to see a very big and sumptuous fair, in which all the chiefs and principal people of that territory should take part, and that there should be a great concourse of people." Aguado tells the story, in one of his interminable sentences.

"The cacique Tunja . . . at the next market, caused the greater part of the chiefs and principal neighbors to come together, and for greater authority he wished to be present in person there where a great abundance of people were gathered,

all of them far from guessing the plan of Hernán Pérez, who, when he was quite sure the people were in the market, sent forth the Spaniards armed on horse and on foot, to surround and make sure of the market plaza, so that no one should go out, and he himself with several of his friends and aides went among the notables and chiefs, and informing himself who each one was, he began with the lord and chief of Tunja, whose head he cut off with his own hand with a cutlass that he carried for the purpose, and the same he did to all the other principal chiefs who were in the marketplace."

Thus, says the good Father, who was an imperialist of the more robust stamp, "he procured to punish this conspiracy with the least fuss possible." Actually, there was no conspiracy; Pérez, a warped and savage man, believed in forestalling events.

Nothing is left of the tragic city of the Zaque. But on the wind-swept, treeless summit of the mountain behind the Spanish town there are still a few stones to mark the place where the temple of the Sun once stood, and near it there is a church.

One other thing remains. Just outside the town, past the prisons on the road that leads to the North, there is a round green oasis in the treeless expanse—a clear shield of water, perhaps a hundred feet across, known as the Pozo de Donato—the Well of Donato. Tradition has it that here the people of Hunsa drowned what treasure they could save when the Spaniards took the city, flinging vessels and ornaments over the stockade to willing hands who bore them to the only hiding place within reach. They probably thought that the supernatural origin of the well would mean surer asylum, for the Pozo is no ordinary pool. Perhaps they were right.

When Hunsahúa, Lord of Tunja, came to the throne there was no Pozo reflecting the sky beyond the palace gates. Hunsahúa was young for the cares and power of rank, but he governed wisely and led his people bravely in battle. He might have ruled long, respected in life and forgotten in death, had he not sinned greatly and so exchanged longevity for immortality. For the Zaque was devoured by a passion for his own sister. Called to a distant part of his realm, he took her with him and made her his wife.

The legend does not say how or where the wedding was performed, but if the ceremony followed the usual form, the priest stood before the couple and asked the girl if she would love God more than her husband, her husband more than her children, her children more than herself. And when she had sworn, the priest asked her if she would promise never to eat if her husband should be hungry, and to this condition she again agreed. Then the man testified that he desired this woman for his wife, conferring upon her alone the rights such position gave, and the marriage was made. (Incidentally, these wifely privileges could take uncomfortable forms. Not only could a dying consort impose five years of chaste mourning on her bereaved spouse, regardless of the expectant charms of a hundred concubines, but wives, particularly chiefs' wives, could beat their husbands—the idea apparently being that since to err is human and no man could raise his hand to a prince, this was a good solution.)

When Hunsahúa and his sister-wife returned to Tunja, they told no one what they had done. But maternal eyes are sharp; the time came when their mother guessed their secret. She confronted her daughter with it in the palace courtyard; the girl jumped up, upsetting the great pot where the maize was soaking to make chicha, and the liquor ran out to form the Pozo de Donato, a perpetual witness to guilty love and avenging society. For even the Zaque was not powerful enough to flout openly the laws of Bachúe; with his companion he left Tunja, never to see its pale roofs and sunny hills again.

I was taken to see the Pozo by an enchanting little boy who had constituted himself our guide. He was a very good guide, self-contained, competent, well informed. His gestures were few, his speech sparse and to the point, and his grin the most beguiling thing in two continents—a very triumph of a grin, made up of humor and awareness and a kind of shy intimacy. Some day I hope to see José Ruben Rojas again, though I could not bear it if I found him changed.

José Ruben's information on churches and monuments had been most correct, so he was probably right in what he told us about the well.

"There is a treasure in there," he said, "an enormous treasure all of gold. Everyone knows about it. But the water is very

deep; a stone on the end of a lasso cannot touch bottom."

Had no one found any *tunjos*? (Tunjos are the gold objects the Chibchas used, and which they offered in the temples and buried with their dead.)

José shook his head.

"Only a very few. People have tried—only three years ago they tried to lower the water, and they almost reached the treasure, but they had to give it up. You see," said José Ruben very seriously, "no one can touch the gold. If they did, the Cathedral in Bogotá would fall. A priest told me."

Because we hated to say good-by, we took José with us when we drove through the mountains to Ramiriquí, whose first cacique helped in the labor of creation and became the Moon, and where that other Chief was killed by the Emerald Child on his way to power. The village, tucked away in the eastern folds of the Cordillera, is like a hundred other mountain towns: a vast square, featureless and deserted, lined with low adobe houses, dominated by a squat-towered colonial church, and stirred only by the pallid excitement of the daily bus with newspapers for the literate inhabitants. An hour or so by trail away, there are some Chibcha rock paintings, like those found near Facatativá and Tota and Suasco, crude tracings which legend attributes to Bochica and says are designs for weaving, and about which archeologists are still in doubt. The red ideographical symbols may have a definite meaning, or they may be merely evidence of a primitive artistic urge, but one thing is sure: The Chibchas knew how to concoct paint that is well-nigh eternal.

The country people of the highlands of Boyacá and Santander are often referred to as Indians. Actually, they are nearly all *mestizos*, in whom the aboriginal strain is still very strong. When the Spanish blood predominates, they sometimes have fine, worn features and deep eye sockets; otherwise the most common type is slant eyed, with high cheekbones, a wide mouth, and a flattish, rather Oriental cast of countenance. By reputation they are stolid and secretive, and inclined to avoid contact with strangers. And yet they did not seem so to me. Shy they may be, but they are friendly, too, and when they answer your smile, it is with a bashful eagerness that is rather

touching. In spite of their size, which is less than average, they are remarkably strong, at any rate muscularly. Men no bigger than twelve-year-old boys carry loads that would bend the backbone of an ox; curved nearly double, a broad headband passed across their foreheads, they proceed at a kind of gliding half run. What ills they have come chiefly from insanitary living and errors of diet—particularly liquid diet—rather than climate. Chicha is bad, but guarapo, a fiery drink with about the quality of quicklime, is infinitely worse. After much anguish of spirit at the thought of lost revenues, most departmental governments have forbidden guarapo, but since the only essential ingredients are panela and water, it is impossible to really eradicate a beverage that gives the maximum of result with a minimum of effort.

Goiter is still prevalent, but the attitude toward it is changing. Time was, when not to have an enlarged thyroid gland was considered rather unfortunate; those who had a goiter wore it with a certain quiet conceit. Particularly fine, well-developed ones were sometimes carried in a kind of sling, and I have heard of an *alcalde*, the owner of a magnificent triple specimen lying heavy and proud on the chest, who quite openly considered that it gave him an enviable air of distinction well in keeping with his office.

Boyacá is not wealthy, although it is relatively densely populated. Wheat, potatoes, maize, sheep and cattle are its main products, and undoubtedly the chilly downs could support a great many more sheep and goats than they now do, with considerable advantage to the import budget. Hopes are high that beyond the Cordillera to the east exploration—already undertaken—will bring to light fresh petroleum deposits, but as yet nothing tangible has been found.

Hunsa was the most important of the Chibcha principalities, after Bacatá itself. But there were other city-states lying only a few miles away, each with its chief and temples and individual organization, many of which are included in the wide boundaries of Boyacá.

A little to the north of Tunja lies Duitama, where the Usaque withstood the Conquistadores till the last, and was finally betrayed, and yielded honorably as was the Chibcha custom,

and died by his own hand because of the humiliations imposed on him in defeat. The marshes that protected the cacique of Duitama for so long were the scene of another combat two hundred and eighty years later—the battle of Vargas Swamp, in 1819, when Bolívar's tattered army defeated the Royalists and opened the road to the south and freedom.

Farther on is the village of Santa Rosa, chiefly remarkable because Colonel Duane, in 1823, wrote that seen from the hills it was exactly like Washington, D. C., in Maytime, only rather more compact. It was through here that Hernán Pérez, searching for the House of the Sun, marched on his way to Cocuy and the valley of Chinocotá, where he found traces of Alfínger—nicknamed Miser Ambrosio—whose infamous career ended there with a poisoned arrow. Pedro de Orsúa, he who was later assassinated on the way down the Amazon by "the monster Aguirre," led an expedition by the same route, looking for the River of Gold, and founded the town of Pamplona.

Near Duitama, a few leagues to the east, is Sogamoso, the Sugamuxi of the Muyscas. Sogamoso was particularly holy; not only was it the cradle of the Chibcha world, but its chiefs wore the mantle of Bochica. Here every year there was a great festival, when from all the neighboring country pious pilgrims brought offerings of gold and emeralds, cunningly wrought in the shapes of men and beasts. The high priest, who had spent long years in the mountains preparing for his mission by study, meditation and denial of the flesh, dominated the worship, which honored Súa and gave thanks for harvest. Processions wound through the town and up to the temple of Iracá: priests in flowing mantles and golden masks, nobles in bright cottons and massy ornaments, children dedicated to the service of the gods; the wail and throb of panpipes and drums was broken by the chatter of *maracas*. Twelve men dressed in scarlet, with golden birds rampant on their headdresses, garlands about their necks, and in their hands crosses made of gold, danced solemnly about a figure robed in celestial blue, chanting of the impermanence of the body and the uncertainty of the soul's destiny.

From Sogamoso tracks led—and still do—down to the many-rivered llanos: trails that hold history and romance in every

mile. By one of them, skirting the Lake of Tota, the Hero-god departed when his mission was completed, walking alone to meet the Sun. The sinless children of Súa, the Mojas, educated in austere seclusion beyond the Guape, were borne along this path to die horribly in pure glory on the sacrificial altars. The brilliant expedition that cost the aging Quesada his fortune and his health went over these passes, strong and hopeful, to seek golden cities and to establish "towns, mills, and farms," only to return years later, a haggard remnant of only forty-five men. Bolívar led his men by the least frequented and most rugged of the trails when he made his fantastic march from the Apure to the Sabana.

The trails are still used for cattle coming from the Arauca grazing lands, driven for months to highland markets, and there is a project—no doubt influenced by the possibility of oil between the Casanare and the Meta—to build a road from Sogamoso to the llanos. Perhaps in a few years it will be possible to drive in shiny sedans where saints and conquerors, patriots and priests struggled a few difficult miles each day; to stop for a moment to admire the view where the army of the Liberator labored agonizingly, leaving its dead in pitiful half-clad heaps. The motorists will put up the windows against the icy wind that froze the exhausted soldiers from the plains, and toss cigarette stubs down the precipices that heard the screams of those who stumbled into space.

The upper Sogamoso Valley produces much the same things as that of Tunja, and along the river there is tagua (ivory nut) and divi-divi. As far as mineral resources go, it is not particularly brilliant; there is reported to be some copper and iron, and rich lead deposits near Tibasoso; the Richmond Petroleum Company (Standard Oil of California) has a vast tract for exploration that runs from a point northeast of Sogamoso all the way to the Río Meta.

Boyacá also produces the finest emeralds in the world—the only ones, legend to the contrary, found in South America. Almost all of them come from either Muzo or Somondoco, jealously guarded hillsides where the veins are worked by Indians who never leave the valleys until their contract is up. There is no road to Muzo, and the authorities are in no hurry

to build one; it is easier to guard a mountain full of emeralds when there is only one mule trail to watch. At present the mines are shut down; oddly enough, four centuries of exploitation have resulted in a loss—the mines have cost more than they brought in.

The tools required for mining are simple in the extreme: a sharpened crowbar and a shovel about completes the list. It is what is on the end of the crowbar that matters, for a careless or maladroit workman could do untold damage. The descendants of the cannibal Panches have a special art; they can put just enough weight into the blow to break the limestone without damaging the calcite or the emeralds, and they can strike the same spot again and again "without deviating a hair's breadth."

The Panches were one of the few tribes that the Conquistadores found too tough for them. Sanmartín tried to penetrate their land, but turned back when he found that he was up against a people "very able in war and bearing arms," whose penchant for convivial feasts based on their recently deceased enemies was so great that "when they were in the greatest peace and quiet, they would start a war one against the other in their own land, in order to have an occasion to eat the bodies of those who died in the conflict." Had he known about the emeralds, he might have been more persistent, but at that time no one was sure of the origin of the green stones, and had they discovered that they came from the stomachs of boa constrictors, they would have found it as natural as a hundred other wonders of the New World.

(The fifteenth century was a good deal harder to surprise than the enlightened twentieth. Anything was possible to the Almighty, who could, and did, produce marvels and miracles with the greatest frequency. If He created alligators, why should He not also create one-eyed giants? It was, after all, no harder to believe in a merman than in an opossum. When Don Juan of Austria sent the King of Spain a picture of a recently discovered creature, half-man, half-satyr, with many heads, arms and eyes, and a huge mouth from which he made a noise like a bull, ambassadors at the court of Seville hastened to copy it and send it to their royal masters as an unusual but not an incredible phenomenon.)

It was Quesada who "discovered" that emeralds came from the earth. He heard about Somondoco from the Indians, and "set forth with the greatest possible good cheer to look for the emerald mines, because until then there had been many and diverse opinions in the world as to the birth and creation of emeralds." The Spaniards were rather disappointed in the mines. They were used to gathering loot with no more trouble than that of killing a few Indians, and a little experiment proved that mining meant "a long and tedious business."

From a point just beyond Somondoco one can see the llanos, and Quesada sent a party to explore. They went as far as the Casanare, where they discovered a village whose people lived largely on ants specially bred for the pot; "seeing this monstrosity of nature, they did not care to pass further." On the whole, the ant-pancakes seem to have worried the conquerors more than cannibal stew, yet ants are still a delicacy in Boyacá and Santander. Fried, they are particularly tasty and agreeably *croquantes*, and make perfect appetizers. I speak from hearsay.

It is said that the vaults of Bogotá hold not pounds or bushels, but tons of raw stones. On the other hand, it is also said that the whole collection is not worth more than \$25,000. Reason favors the lesser figure, but it is more fun to believe that in underground rooms shut with seven keys the uncut gems lie in heaps, smoldering like green slag. The deserted workings are carefully guarded, lest some enterprising amateur with a crowbar should happen by, and there is probably less leakage now than when Muzo was operating full time. For just as there are I. D. B.'s in South Africa, so were there illicit emerald sellers in Colombia—usually peons who let the stones go for a song when they wanted a little money for Saturday night. And this, logically enough, is why there were no chickens in Muzo. Chickens have such convenient crops, and if a housewife finds an emerald when she is cutting up the fowl for dinner—why, it is evidently the will of Providence. There was once a parish priest who wore a waistcoat entirely buttoned with emeralds, the result of a series of chicken dinners. Even donkeys have been used by their inventive owners as temporary repositories.

Emeralds sound so valuable that it is a slight shock to learn how little they mean in actual wealth. The whole annual trade

counts less in Colombian economy than the wild cabuya that is used for ropes and sandals.

Almost every village name in Boyacá, as in Cundinamarca, brings memories of chiefs and conquerors. One is a living legend: Chiquinquirá (which means in Muysca, City of the Priests), where the Miraculous Virgin draws pilgrims from half of South America. The Miraculous Virgin is an indifferent, darkish painting that long ago belonged to a laundress named María Ramos. One day a terrible storm swept the valley, and María's poor ranchito was destroyed by the wind and water. The canvas of the Madonna was found in shreds in a puddle—when lo, in a twinkling it had grown together again, and no one could even detect the joins. Now it is above the altar of the Cathedral of Chiquinquirá, in a gold and silver frame much ornamented with jewels, and before it kneel people from the farms near by, or from Popayán, or from Perú, united in a common faith and a common need.

I had been a little disappointed in the bare, gray church of the Miracle and even in the picture between the tall gold candlesticks. And then I saw María Ramos—for surely the stout old woman before the shrine was an incarnation of the blessed laundress. Her voluminous skirt spread fanwise about her as she knelt on the cold stone; a black shawl framed her head and half covered her dark red blouse. Eyes fixed on the holy image, gnarled hands joined to raise a candle to the Mother of God, she prayed aloud in rapid urgent tones. Such adoring, unquestioning faith as lit that brown, worn face there cannot be this side of Paradise. Dear María Ramos! I hope the Virgin heard you; that prayer was never for yourself.

Cochrane has a story about the Madonna of Chiquinquirá which he tells with some detail. According to this, a French officer of the Revolution named Cervière, conceiving the idea of turning the Miraculous Virgin to his own use, stole the image with the intention of starting a new shrine in which he would officiate as high priest. The movement of Cervière for Pontiff was shortlived; the vandal was defeated at Cattesa and the canvas restored to its rightful guardians. This is one of the prettiest bits of garbled history I have ever met, and I have met some honeys. Briefly, the French officer was not named Cervière,

but Sérviez—Manuel Sérviez. He was not a charlatan, but one of the most distinguished generals of the patriot cause. He did not steal the Virgin; it was carried before his columns by Dominican priests, to rouse the people to resistance, and brought back by them when the patriots were defeated at Cáqueza (*not* Catesa). And yet Cochrane was in Colombia only seven years after these things happened, and his friends were the men who had taken part in them! It gives one a very wobbly feeling, remembering all the contemporary source material one has accepted with simple faith.

Chiquinquirá, in addition to being a place of pilgrimage, is an important market town. There are four market plazas, one for livestock, one for cloth, one general—mostly foodstuffs—and one for pottery, and on fair-days they are crowded. The pottery is mostly from Raquirá, where there is a pure white clay of extraordinary fineness; the potters form crude and touching little figures of the things they know best: horses, and women with babies, and men playing the guitars called *tiples*, which are a local specialty. The narrow streets are a succession of tiny shops, evidently there to catch the pilgrim trade. They sell strings of miniature jugs and vases, toys, reed panpipes in all sizes, and the *tiples*—big ones for use and small ones for souvenirs. In one square a photographer takes tourist pictures against a magnificent painted background of a snorting locomotive. The people of Chiquinquirá are not particularly simpáticos, but they evidently have a head for business.

There is one story of Chiquinquirá which I find particularly appealing. When Colonel Duane visited it more than a century ago, he was received with delightful hospitality in one of the monasteries of the city. There was a priest there who had once been to Jamaica, and on his trip he had with much effort learned a ceremonious phrase in English—a phrase of flowery and rounded courtesy such as would be proper to use when meeting illustrious foreigners. Delighted at the opportunity to use his painfully memorized sentence, he hurried to greet the distinguished guests. Standing in the doorway, he bowed low and with a happy smile enunciated with care and distinctness:

“Go to hell, you damned son of a bitch.”

Captain Cochrane says that when he came this way in 1823,

he was offered a copper mine at Moniquirá, north of the city of the Virgin. The price was \$10,000. It was a rich lode, but Cochrane decided against it "as there was too little demand for copper." He did, however, get the concession for the emerald mines, through his Bogotano friend Paris—the Pepe Paris who was interested in draining Guatavita Lake. Paris also planned to drain the huge expanse of the shallow Lake of Fúquene, south of Chiquinquirá, and form a joint stock company to settle the resultant bottom land with Scotch farmers. I do not know what happened to this grandiose scheme; the lake is there and the Scotchmen are not.

It was in the Lake of Fúquene that there lived the demon Fu. In the daytime he hid under the waters; at night he howled along the road to Muzo. Now it happened that the man-eating savages of Muzo moved in war against the Chibchas, and the Chibchas were afraid. They went to the lake and threw in golden tunjos and implored Fu to help them against the Panches, who would surely fall on them and eat them unless the demon could hold them off. So when night came Fu emerged from the lagoon with terrible roars, and taking a gigantic rock, he went up the way to Tausa to block the narrow pass. But unfortunately Fu was an ardent *turmequé* player (a game on the order of bowls, using flat stone disks), and on the way he became so absorbed in the game that he lost all count of time. Dawn found him far from the pass, and terrified lest he should be still above water when the Lord Súa appeared in the East, Fu dropped the stone and fled. There it lies to this day, with undeciphered inscriptions which tell of his failure.

The story does not say what happened to the Chibchas.

There is a railway from the green and fertile valley of Chiquinquirá to the capital, and a choice of routes by road. I advise the road, though parts of it are planted with raised culverts that are a problem for anything but a Model T Ford. It takes you through Ubaté and Tausa, where in a great battle the chiefs of Susa, Ubaté and Simijaca were killed, leaving the Zipa of Bacatá victorious in the field, and thence to Zipaquirá, which also fell to Bacatá. This Zipa was the great Nemequene, who

dreamed a union of all the Chibcha peoples, and believed like others after him that the end justified the means.

Zipaquirá and the near-by Nemocón were a rich prize, for it is there that the famous salt mines are located. For more than eighty kilometers the mountains are practically solid salt, and even today only a small part need be worked to supply the country. As once the chiefs controlled the precious mineral, which they exchanged for gold, so now it is a Government monopoly. Miles of arched and vaulted galleries, over fifty feet high, are cut in the solid rock—that is to say, in solid salt. The walls are leaden in color, occasionally patched with white, the light is dim, and the combination of spaciousness, obscurity and silence give a curious underworld atmosphere. If one found a boat made of cobwebs in the black pools that reflect the brave shining of an isolated bulb, it would be that which was used to ferry Chibcha souls to the dark kingdom. There are gangs of men drilling in lofty side arches, but the place is so immense that the sound seems lost; they are seen as shadows moving in deeper shadows, a ghostly crew, “all silent and all damned.” As one walks through the central gallery, like a nave with side aisles lined with chapels, one comes from time to time into an enormous hall. One of these is consecrated; there is an altar, always lit, and a few benches for the devout who come to Mass. At intervals, too, there are little shrines carved in salt, with a pair of candlesticks and some paper flowers and a scattering of humble offerings laid before them.

The mines produce both rock salt, such as one sees in lumps in any market place, and salt water for the manufacture of the coarse granulated salt of commerce. The water comes out of the mines at saturation point and is piped or carried to the factories in the town below. These factories are of two kinds: the modern, mechanical type, like the Salina de los Andes, that turns out three tons of salt, ready packed, an hour, and the primitive variety, which have boiling houses that have not changed materially for centuries. The basis of this age-old system is the enormous *ollas*, the red clay jars higher than a man, in which the water is boiled, as the foreman told me, “for eighteen days and eighteen nights” before being broken to get the salt.

The ollas are new for each boiling; they cost three pesos each,



INSIDE THE SALT MINES AT ZIPAQUIRA

The walls are
solid salt, part of
a formation that
extends for over
fifty miles

EXTRACTING SALT FROM WATER PIPED FROM THE MINES

The boiling ollas
sunk to the lip in
the ground can be
seen at the foot
of the baskets



and it takes ten days to fit and ready them for a boiling. The first step is to plaster them in rows, the lip flush with the ground. Underneath the pit is fired, and the jars are filled with saturated water. As they bubble, the salt around the edges and on the surface is skimmed off and stacked in baskets, one above the other, so that before the process is finished, they stand in leaning towers above each olla, with something the effect of a Victorian *étagère*. Then the fires are pulled; the jars cool; from the smashed fragments the salt is taken to be packed in sacks, and the process starts all over again. A good-sized salina of this type will produce 250 to 350 tons in a cooking.

Between Zipaquirá and Bogotá lies the village of Chía, which in Chibcha means the Moon. Here, just at the edge of the Sabana, Jiménez de Quesada and his devil-may-care adventurers, "it being Holy Week and time to dispose and prepare their souls for confession and to pass the holy time in quiet spiritual retreat," rested until the Sunday after Easter in April 1537 before marching against Bacatá. There is a curious statue here, in the center of the plaza, carved in pale stone. It shows the Moon, curved over an infant in a massive protective crescent—not the male deity of the legend of Ramiriquí, but Chía, divinely feminine, created by Chiminigagua to give light in darkness. The figure has a good deal of primitive power; it is intriguing to think that this almost disturbing evocation of lost gods should have been erected by village subscription a little time ago.

Tisquesusa, who succeeded his uncle Nemequene, Strength of Lions, as Zipa of Bacatá, was a prince of Chía. Medrano wrote that he was "very proud, and gifted with more acumen than one would expect in such a rustic type." He had fought mightily against the Fusagasugáes and the Panches, but against the Spaniards his arm failed. Had he not dreamed a river of blood, sure sign of the wrath to come? His men went out to meet Quesada, arrayed for battle and bearing before them the mummies of their dead, but they came without hope. Yet in the end the invaders were left burlados, for it was Tisquesusa who, with the help of his Captain-General, "a very secret man," contrived to hide the treasure of Bacatá while don Gonzalo hurried in forced marches from Tunja.

The careless lance-thrust of a common soldier, who did not know who it was he had struck down, ended all hope of riches in the Sabana. The Zipa died of his wounds and was buried in a place no one knows. His successor, Sagipa, was the same very secret man who saw the coveted treasure carried to safety; he mocked the conquerors by revealing that it consisted of two hundred hundredweight of gold, not counting the trays of choice emeralds, but he died under torture rather than say where it was hid. After him there were no more Zipas in Bacatá.

CHAPTER XIII

Border Town

CÚCUTA, capital of the Department of Norte de Santander, is enjoying a modest boom. The wheels of commerce turn smoothly, greased by Catatumbo oil, for the recently developed Barco Concession lies within the province, and Cúcuta is both the seat of the Company's general offices and the nearest supply town for the field. Sixty-six American families have come to live there within the last eighteen months; the shops carry an assortment of house dresses made in Seventh Avenue, beauty preparations made in France and whisky made almost anywhere; the small hotels (one of them complete with private bathrooms and a diminutive swimming pool) surge with transient oil men *en permiso*, salesmen and visiting executives, while they enjoy the solid patronage of oil widows whose husbands are in the camps. There is a dearth of suitable houses to accommodate this sudden influx, and rents are as high as those of Bogotá. To these local blessings must be added the income accruing to the department from its 50 per cent share of the petroleum royalties, plus 5 per cent for the town itself. At present averages this comes to the tidy sum of about a quarter of a million pesos a year and is expected to roll in every twelvemonth in increasing amounts to build water systems, power plants and other public works throughout the region.

But all this is since yesterday. Before ever petroleum dawned on the Colombian horizon, Cúcuta was a name to conjure with. Anything connected with the Revolution that gave the country its independence is revered by the descendants of those who suffered for a decade that the land of their birth should be a

nation, and Cúcuta is both the city of the famous Constituent Congress and the birthplace of Santander, *el Hombre de las Leyes*. Indeed, at one time this border town was the visionary capital of a nonexistent republic as large as most of Europe.

In 1819 an odd, impassioned and idealistic meeting of revolutionary delegates took place at Angostura, far down the Río Orinoco. It is typical of the Latin love of ideas that the congress, representing the hounded and still unsuccessful rebels, discussed in solemn detail not only the outlines of future government and the areas to be included in the new union, but also the philosophical merits of certain moral concepts as applied to practical administration. In the end, with magnificent effrontery, it proclaimed the "Fundamental Law of Union": Venezuela, New Granada and Quito were declared one free republic. The fact that the greater part of those countries was still in the hands of the Spanish was considered one of those ephemeral realities that are better ignored. This illogical, absurd and splendid confidence, which made even Morillo, the Spanish general, exclaim in admiration, was the patriots' greatest asset. Bolívar had it supremely, to a degree that would have been ridiculous if it had not been so magnificently justified. It may be that the Liberator's habit of expressing this faith in terms of personal genius, while no doubt warranted, helped to irritate young Santander who, more able than brilliant, could only shine undimmed when Bolívar was elsewhere.

At Angostura, Cúcuta had been named temporary capital of Great Colombia, and there the first Constituent Congress met in May 1821. In the year and a half since the Angostura Congress the situation had completely changed, and the patriots were in the saddle, never again to be cast out. Five months after Boyacá, on New Year's Day, 1820, Morillo received orders from Madrid, where King Ferdinand had been having his own troubles, to seek an armistice with the revolutionaries. The truce (followed by a curious love feast between the Spanish general and the rebel leader) was not signed until November, when emissaries went to Spain to negotiate a peace. The mission was foredoomed to failure, since the Colombian terms were beyond acceptance; by April 1821 hostilities began again to result in the smashing victory of Carabobo—the battle that gave

Venezuela to the rebels and which Bolívar himself said "marked the political birth of Colombia."

The Congress was in session when the Army of Liberation entered Caracas in triumph. Bolívar, who undertook a thousand-mile mule ride with the casual indifference with which a man today might take the Twentieth Century Limited, hurried back to Cúcuta to use his influence to get his proposed Constitution adopted, a project in which he was not entirely successful. Colombians, passionate and often unaccommodating when in the grip of an idea, are curiously balanced when it comes to the practical execution of their theories. It may sometimes be a little difficult to get things done as they carefully and vocally weigh the pros and cons, but they cannot be stampeded, even by leaders they admire extravagantly. Even in the first flush of victory and the full tide of adoration for the almost legendary Liberator, they turned down their hero's plan for a kind of hereditary oligarchy headed by a President elected for life.

A great deal was accomplished in Cúcuta besides the democratic constitution and the reaffirmation of the Fundamental Law (without Quito, this time, when the body was dealing with realities). Slavery was abolished; aborigines admitted to citizenship; the Inquisition, which had persisted until then, finally swept away; laws elaborating the administrative machinery of government were worked out. The very name of Colombia originated there, chosen "in memory of the illustrious navigator who brought as the basis of civilization the religion of Christ and the speech of Castille." Robertson calls the results of the First Constituent Congress "the most notable political achievement of the South American republics in the first quarter of the nineteenth century."

The church at San Rosario where the Congress met was destroyed by an earthquake; all that now remains is part of a yawning red-brick shell standing beside a grassy square. There has never been any movement to rebuild it—fortunately, for what sentiment could be aroused by a spick-and-span new edifice?—and with equal sensibility there is as yet no attempt to turn the place into a tidy garden fitted with marble statues.

In addition to being the ghostly first capital and entertaining the first Constituent Congress, Cúcuta also achieved the first

railway in Colombia—thirty-four miles of narrow gauge to Puerto Villamizar on the Río Zulia. The little engines still puff importantly down the main streets of the city, preferably about 5:30 A.M.—not really early for Cúcuta, where office hours begin at 6:30 or 7:00 and life is in full and noisy swing soon after sunup. Beyond Villamizar traffic was by *bongos*, cargo boats poled by twenty men; from Encontrados on the lower Catatumbo there were lake steamers to Maracaibo, where the ocean-going vessels call. It cost \$120 to send a ton of coffee to New York; the freight charges were often far more than the value of the goods themselves.

Cúcuta—a mere child as Colombian towns go, counting but a paltry hundred and ninety years of existence—lies in an open, rather arid valley at the edge of the Cordillera a few miles from the frontier. So far as I know, it is the only Colombian city founded by a woman; Doña Josefa Ranjel de Cuellar, a wealthy hacendada, established it with the name of San José Guasimales. Shut off from the rest of Colombia by natural barriers, its only exit was the long and complicated river route through Venezuela. Communications with the hinterland were limited to the rough trails that wound precariously up the tremendous passes of the Andes—a state of things that persisted until only a few years ago. Down these harrowing tracks came the mule trains loaded with fine coffee from Pamplona, the burros with food for the city. Between the hours of ten and two, four or five hundred mules would shuffle into Cúcuta, milling about in the streets and squares; after two o'clock no pack trains were allowed in the town, and the dust settled until the next morning.

Until 1926, when the first carriage road was completed as far as Pamplona, all travel was in the saddle. One rode, or one stayed at home. A good riding mule was above rubies, and fetched as much as a thousand dollars. In this country of great distances, it was worth paying almost any price to have an easy-gaited animal that would take you sixty or seventy kilometers, uphill and down, in a day. The happy owners of these super-mules, when they went to Pamplona on business, slept at La Duana; less fortunately mounted travelers had to be content with Jiménez, and take three to four days over the trip;

hoi polloí made their first stop at El Diamante. There were mule-hostels along the trails, where pack trains stayed the night at a cost of ten or fifteen centavos a head; when Juan Vicente Gómez, the late tyrant of Venezuela (a Cucutano by birth, the illegitimate son of a respectable middle-class Colombian) found it healthier to go into temporary retirement across the border, his hacienda "Los Vados," near Cúcuta, was a favorite stopping place that netted him a comfortable and relatively blameless part of his income.

The *posadas* have dwindled, and there is not the money there once was in mules. The big sleek fellows that used to fetch the price of a good automobile are sold for 200 pesos or less. One can drive to Caracas or Bogotá—for that matter, one can drive to Quito—either in a private car or in the *volquetes* (station wagons) that have regular daily services at so much a seat. Buses, crammed to the gills with passengers, ply to all the near-by towns and villages. Airplanes take a little more than an hour from Barranquilla, something over two to Bogotá. The Moyen Age conditions that lasted until fifteen years ago have vanished.

The first motorcar came to Cúcuta long before the first roads. In 1914 an Italian merchant brought in a Ford from Maracaibo. Anxiously awaited, it finally was poled up the river, put on a train and delivered to its proud proprietor. Although it had been acquired more as a curiosity than with any idea of use, disappointment was keen when the fact dawned, once it stood there in all its arrogant splendor, that there was no gasoline to make it go. A month passed before the petrol arrived, and for fifteen days owner and friends lived dangerously, learning how to run it by the instruction book. At the end the car had said good-by forever to its youthful beauty, but it was still as fascinating as the only girl in a lumber camp, and it paid for itself handsomely transporting wide-eyed adventurers around the square for a peso a ride.

The first intimate bathroom fixture followed the automobile by a year; there was considerable controversy as to the method of installation, but history does not record whether it, too, was self-liquidating.

Cúcuta is a pleasant place, cheerful and sun washed. Colonel

Duane, when he visited it in 1822, found it a flourishing city with a gratifying amount of night life, and describes with quiet relish the concerts and dancing, the pretty women and good dinners and full-bodied wines. The Colonel had a palate—not his least engaging trait. Now there are villas and wide tree-lined streets and garden squares filled with flowering trees, and low houses painted in clear colors. (The wide streets and low houses are the signs of earthquake country; the quake of 1875 practically destroyed the city.) Honking automobiles still raise clouds of red dust, but that will be changed once the work of laying the water mains is done; there is to be a filtration plant to rival those of Barranquilla and Bogotá, and soon the home boiling and filtering, the carts selling big bottles of *agua cristalizada*, the open canals and household cisterns and plain, fruity river water will only be I-remember-whens.

With automobiles and airplanes and all the impact of modern living, customs are changing while you look at them. Cúcuta used to be rigidly bound by the most conservative Spanish traditions; only a little while ago mourning for a near relative lasted for six crepe-hung years, during which time the female members of the bereaved family wore black shawls covering all but their eyes when they ventured out of the house, and even the piano, symbol of gaiety, was muffled in a black cloth. But the streets have not lost character. There are still strings of mules and burros; peasants of strongly Indian cast, with braided hair, walk in the shadow of the painted walls; men on horseback in chaps and spurs—a feature anywhere in Colombia outside completely urban centers—amble among the motorcars. (Do not, however, allow yourself to be tricked by the appearance of these horsemen into a romantic picture based on a rude existence in remote ranches—that *may* be all there is to it, and on the other hand, they may have just come back from a visit to Chicago.) In the squares beside the taxi stands vendors squat beside the sidewalks, selling cold drinks—*fresco de curuba*, barley water, *masato*—at a centavo a glass, out of white enamel slop pails. Funerals—elegant ones preceded by a band playing gay or martial music, poor ones with rented coffins—are still a little different from those elsewhere.

The new villas are charming and comfortable, but I like the

older houses better, with their flowery patios and airy rooms shut off with half doors, and the dignity that space and privacy bestow. Incidentally, the owners of the villas and the houses may have others in Nice or Paris.

There are two other cities of importance in Norte de Santander: Pamplona and Ocaña. Ocaña lies at the top of the mountains between the Río Magdalena and the valley of Cúcuta, and from the river port of Gamarra a cableway sails up to it in five aerial hours. Alfinger, "the most cruel of cruel men," came through this way in 1533 with the German expedition from Coro that crossed from Maracaibo to the Magdalena and returned by Cúcuta, leaving death in its wake; Bolívar rested there when he took his triumphant little army over the passes from victory to victory. The sultry Bolivarian-versus-Santanderist Congress of 1828 was held there—a peculiarly inaccessible spot to choose for the purpose.

Pamplona, high and cool, is the most colorful cold-country town I have ever seen. The old colonial houses, streaked with wooden balconies, are painted yellow or jade or blue, with contrasting tints around the doors and windows in scrolls and arabesques; the prison is washed in a particularly pleasing shade of pink. There is a fine cathedral on a huge square laid out beautifully in a formal garden, and a pension with an enchanting patio full of roses and flowering shrubs, which still conserves the cobbled inclined mule entrance. One or two super-modern, many-windowed buildings, one of them a clinic, look like lost bits of Detroit or San Francisco. The city boasts a little natural history museum; and there is a white colonial mission church built by Fathers who came hard on the discoverer's heels to teach and convert the Indians.

They were not accommodating, those aborigines whose blood runs hot in the mountain folk of Norte de Santander. The story is still told of the cacique who, chained to six slaves, was put to torture to make him reveal the whereabouts of his treasure. He consented to guide his captors on the condition that the six slaves should be changed for six of the most important Spaniards, as a tribute to his rank. The Conquistadores were not squeamish when it was a matter of loot; they agreed, and the party set off up the mountains. When they came to the brink

of a high cliff, the cacique leaped, dragging his captors with him. If you go that way at night, you can hear their screams echoing from rock to rock at the bottom of the ravine.

Memory, always perversely tenacious about unimportant details, insists that whenever I think of Pamplona, I think of General Gregor MacGregor, the Scotch volunteer in the cause of liberty. The General was not one of the more shining figures of the Revolution. Whenever the light of history falls briefly on him, it seems to catch him in attitudes more prudent than valorous. In 1813, charged with the protection of Pamplona, he discreetly withdrew to less exposed regions, and the undefended city was promptly sacked by the Royalists. He had imagination, however, and from that comes his special cachet. In 1817 he attempted to invade Florida, a sufficient title in itself; in 1821 we find him established on the northeast coast of Central America, no longer an unsuccessful general but, *motu proprio*, a monarch: His Highness the Cacique of the Poyais Indians.

The potential wealth of the Pamplona district, and the mountainous southern half of the department in general, is not limited to cattle and coffee, though these, and particularly the second, are the chief products of the district. There is the usual maize, rice, sugar cane and so forth; some cotton; divi-divi and tagua nut for export; high-grade mules. With the casual generosity of Colombian geology, there is copper and iron, gypsum and limestone, marble and talc (a whole mountain of it); reputedly, there is gold, lead, zinc, sulphur, radium and uranium. It is an impressive list, but there are often considerations of quality, quantity or location that make many of them unprofitable. Yet who knows? Perhaps some day uranium will make Santander del Norte the hub of a new power combine, a salient point on the shape of things to come.

CHAPTER XIV

Men Against the Jungle

THIS IS THE STORY—part of it—of two hundred and sixty-three miles of twelve-inch pipe, and if you have previously been under the impression that pipe is a dull and soulless piece of hardware of purely professional interest, fruitless as a topic of sustained conversation, you have been mistaken. These lengths of spun steel tubing are romance and danger and high endeavor; they are strange adventure and death from ambush. They are also dividends. In the case in point they are the line that carries oil from the new Barco fields across the jungle-clothed mountains and watery lowlands to tidewater on the Caribbean.

The new pipeline is interesting commercially because it means thousands of barrels a day of high-grade crude for the world's markets; professionally it has had a good deal of lime-light because it is a triumph of technical ingenuity, modern organization, and the potent leverage of twenty-six million dollars. But it is also, even more than most great enterprises, whether inspired by a starry ideal or by the desire for bigger and better profits, a question of human quality. There is a good deal more to oil than appears in a filling station or the financial pages of the *New York Times*. Mrs. Horace Smithers of South Bend or the Reverend Samuel Higgenbottom of Little Mudham, Hants, who invested some of the money from Uncle's life insurance in petroleum shares, seldom stop to think about the weatherbeaten, unshaven men doing their damndest in a temperature of 130° in the shade somewhere about the Red Sea, or working waist deep in stagnant water in a South Amer-

ican jungle. Big business resolves itself quite often into khaki-clad, sweaty men who know sand and swamp and fever, whose menus are leathery meat and the products of assorted cans, and whose means of transportation, when they are not four-legged and long-eared, are battered trucks that have forgotten what a four-color ad ever looked like.

The Barco job was not different in kind, but in degree. The lower part of the route is flat, marshy, intersected by water-courses and lagoons, prone to floods in the rainy season, hot, steamy and mosquito-ridden. It was no particular fun growing web feet in this amphibious region, though it wasn't so bad until the waters got too high for wading and they had to paddle from their beds to the mess tent, but it was the upper part that was the sort of thing small boys dream of seeing when they grow up—the mountainous, unexplored wilds between the Venezuelan border and the westward bastions of the Sierra Perija. This is the country that even the Conquistadores, who fought their way to Bogotá and marched from Turbo to Perú, had given up as hopeless.

Generically, it is known as the Catatumbo. For hundreds of kilometers the last spurs of the Andes are covered with unbroken jungle a hundred and fifty to two hundred feet high, lying thick and even as a woven carpet. From the air its apparently solid surface looks capable of holding up anything from a cigarette to a locomotive; on the ground you may make your way for endless days and never see the sun. The only inhabitants are the Motilone Indians, whose simple minds are imbued with an unrelenting hatred of anyone who attempts to violate their seclusion, and whose arguments in favor of splendid isolation are more forceful than polite.

The resistance of Nature and the Motilones to outside influence and entangling alliances was almost 100 per cent perfect. Almost, but not quite. In 1920 a young engineer in the employ of the Carib Syndicate made his way from the Río Magdalena to Maracaibo by way of the Río de Oro and came out to tell the tale in a spare, practical account that gives not an ounce to fancy. Case Willcox (Major Henry C. to the Army) had spent many months exploring with M. J. Bolan, the Cerro Bobali, east of Tamalameque. Having mapped the peaks and

found a practicable pass, Willcox conceived the idea of going on to find the Río de Oro's southern branch and follow it to Venezuela. It was the logical completion of the surveys already made; it was also completely mad.

On October twenty-fourth, with twelve unconvinced peons, ten days' rations and a number of dogs, he started to cut a way over the pass. (The dogs were for protection against the Motilones, who hate and fear them, but their subsequent use was alimentary.) Rations had been exhausted for twenty days when the party hove in sight of the oil camp twelve miles up the river from its confluence with the lower Catatumbo. The last monkey and the last emaciated dog were only a fond memory; Willcox had lost forty pounds in weight. It is probable that they were never in greater danger—not when they lay hidden, too weak from fever to move, and watched the Motilones pass a stone's throw away, or when their makeshift raft was lost in the rapids—than when they found themselves in a position to eat themselves to death.

"We ate for forty-eight hours," Willcox told me once, "at two-hour intervals, while our fronts came unstuck from our backbones. It was wonderful."

Three days later, gaunt, disreputable, and liberally inlaid with *gusanos* (the loathsome flies that bite and lay their eggs beneath the skin to hatch barbed worms that resist extraction) he reached Encontrados. No one has ever repeated his route, which is north of the Petrolea-Coveñas line; when every step must be cut from the heart of green twilight and human contact is expressed in terms of a five-foot arrow, there is a notable absence of tourist trade.

Yet this was the country that had to be crossed if Barco oil was ever to be more than a geological fact. Oil in its native heath is about as valuable as a sealskin swimming in the Bering Sea, but for thirty years the shadow of the jungle had lain threateningly on board meetings in Pittsburgh and New York; the long bows of the Motilones winged pointed arguments whose crude but effective persuasion was vividly felt in offices two thousand miles away, and the pipeline from Petrolea to the Caribbean was no nearer realization than the Channel tunnel. The Texaco-Socony partnership started almost from scratch.

People who have been there, even now when the game is won, can understand why.

One day last January, I sat in the veranda of a corrugated iron shack on the banks of the Río Tarra, in a pleasant state of relaxation pointed by thoughts of dinner and only slightly tempered by *jején* bites. It was what Mr. Wordsworth would have termed a beauteous evening calm and free, had the poet ever ridden a bucking pickup into the Catatumbo. The dying light turned the river to old pewter and laid a pale wash over the landing field beyond, stopping defeated at the enclosing wall of jungle; the mountains marched northward in ranks of indigo and purple. Crowning the ridge that rises sheer behind the camp, the lights of Bella Vista pump station hung halfway up the sky. Compared to what it had been a year before, Tarra Camp was a Sunday school, but even so, the peace-drenched atmosphere was deceptive. When the sudden dark of the tropics hid the view and the glare of a naked bulb reduced the scheme of things to four zinc walls, it was evident that this was not exactly a vacation spot. The veranda, fronting two rooms furnished almost exclusively with a surprising number of cots, was tastefully decorated with five homemade chairs (constructed for supermen with six-foot legs), a table, a tin trunk and a watercooler; the bibelots conformed to the artistic dictum that ornament should have a definite purpose, and consisted of two revolvers, a box of cartridges, the latest number of a technical review, a Flit gun, a bottle of medicine, three ancient and dog-eared magazines, cigarettes and one of those sturdy lighters that can only be worked by the combined efforts of two men and a boy. Taken all together, it was a story in synopsis.

Tarra must have been something to see in its heyday, a busy place ill suited to nervous souls in delicate health. The landing field beside the river, painfully hewed by hand from matted jungle full of trees so hard that only dynamite could fell them (the first plane in nosed up in the soft ground; righted, it was hitched to three hundred men and hauled up and down for days to make a surface) was as busy as a metropolitan airport. Big cargo Fords, loaded with everything a construction job requires, from fifteen-ton caterpillars to canned corn, and steel girders to mosquito nets, settled majestically on the 1,000-foot runway;

tiny red Stinsons came and went at half-hour intervals. Four hundred mules labored over the fresh trails to Ocaña and Convención, stumbling and wallowing for days in belly-deep mud, their packs filled with yuca and maize and panela; meat came in on the hoof, the survivors arriving in fine hard condition after a week or so on the trail. Later, when the road had been sketched in, pipe trucks and lorries came through, corkscrewing down the breakneck drop from Bella Vista, mud-incrusted and rakish. Twenty-five hundred laborers answered the siren every morning.

There was also Tarra Town, a mushroom growth of shacks beyond the barbed-wire enclosure of the camp, which catered to the workmen and was a thorn in the flesh of the bosses, and which for sheer, roaring devilment was a little masterpiece. While it lasted, it represented Deadwood in terms of the South American jungle, and that is something to ponder. It has gone now; even when I saw it, it had lost the old élan, and the straggling double row of cane and thatch huts seemed as mild as milk.

But all this came later. The first step was the survey.

As I have said, the problem was to run a line through a hundred miles of unexplored jungle, across a series of mountain ranges rising to nearly 6,000 feet, under or over a number of rivers, some of them major arteries, and through a long stretch of waterlogged lowland to a port between Cartagena and Panamá. It also involved creating the port itself. Most of it was a challenge, which is probably why men who could be somewhere else leave home and family to swelter in "the weariness, the fever and the fret" of jobs like this. Because of the type of undertaking, the challenge was particular, so that all through, from top to bottom, it was the personal factor, the individual, which bulked large.

Discomfort, danger and the unemotional loneliness of the pioneer were these men's daily bread, and although this may be nothing novel in a profession whose *raison d'être* is so often concealed in places that are inaccessible, unpleasant, or both, the fact remains that two months of the sort of thing that is their normal way of life provides lesser folk with an aureola of daredevil adventure that can wow a thousand cocktail parties.

Beyond professional ability and physical toughness, this kind of setup takes nerve, or more precisely, guts; those who can't take it get out—and later thrill the folks back home with beautiful I-fought-the-Indians-single-handed tales that would curdle the blood of any Ladies' Auxiliary. The rest say little and stick to it, carrying out a fantastic job in the matter-of-fact manner of a suburbanite catching the 8:10 from Bronxville. It is rumored that there was once, long ago and far away, a smug and fussy oil man; his early end is, to coin a phrase, shrouded in mystery.

The Catatumbo is lovely to look at, but not particularly delightful to know. I have seen it all—the sissy way, now that the work is done, by plane and truck—as beautiful and pitiless a country as any in the world. But it was the small sample I had of what it is like to chop a passage through a wall of jungle a hundred and seventy-five feet high and ten thousand kilometers square that really told me what those first months were.

There is something fascinating and horrible about this furious vegetation, struggling in a frenzied will to live. Below the jungle roof, where the big trees fan out to the sun, a tangled mass of shoots and parasites and creepers strangle one another in mortal embrace; you have an odd feeling that it would be enough to stand still for a little while, and they would twine themselves about you. An unused trail is swallowed up in a few weeks; the traveled road must be continually freed from green arms that reach out hungrily to devour it.

For perhaps an hour I followed a *machetero* through this violent vegetable world, moving slowly behind the swinging blade, stepping carefully on ground spongy with rotting plants and treacherous with fallen trees. An hour was fun; the thought of slow weeks in those shadowy depths was a good deal less appealing. No wonder the men came out blanched to an anomalous lilylike pallor; day after day they hacked a few difficult miles, to make a sketchy camp at night and go on with the next dawn, and except at occasional watercourses they never felt the clean air of an open sky or looked up to see the stars. The whole business was done by compass; to get any general idea of the terrain meant working a way to a mountaintop and then climbing the biggest tree within reach.

It rained, of course (the fall is anything from 60 to 200 inches a year in the two wet seasons, which are here called winter regardless of the month), and there was malaria and Indian fever and a selection of things that bite as well as the usual supply of snakes. The jejenes, minute and hungry flies, fell on the unexpected human provender with voracious delight; in some places—Camp Nine, for instance—there was a plague of crickets that not even Dickens could have loved: active little black beggars who bit neat pieces out of any handy anatomy. Rations were measured, since camp equipment, instruments, arms and ammunition had to be carried as well, and it was often a long way between drinks.

For hundreds of years this region has been a fruitful source of legend: of white Indians and hidden cities, of diamonds and strange beasts, of magic and rivers that ran uphill. Anything was possible, since no one knew, and all things considered, the reports were fairly restrained. If the stories current were of the stuff that dreams are made on, the revealed reality is strange enough for the most exacting taste. There are, alas, no diamonds—much to everyone's disgust, there seems to be no mineral wealth at all beyond that of oil—and no secret cities, and the rivers, if their course is sometimes at variance with the suppositious maps, flow correctly in accordance with the laws of gravity. The blond Indian myth, that hardy perennial, is, as usual, without foundation.

But there are animals that seem queer enough: glossy black ones with bushy tails, barred with orange, such as I saw beyond the Orú; albino opossums; and even, according to one popular science review, the missing link. I cannot say as to the magic, about which I have an open mind slightly leaning toward credulity; there are certainly things in these lands that our knowledge cannot explain.

There are, for instance, the Catatumbo Lights. Visible to ships 150 to 200 miles out at sea, in the rainy season their mysterious glare waxes and wanes like a kind of constant sheet lightning, and science is still baffled as to their cause. An engineer told me of sheltering one night above a river while the rain came down in solid sheets like water from a bucket; all through the storm there shone a bright greenish light, so strong that

every leaf and twig on the opposite bank stood out distinct, and it was possible to read fine print; little wisps of vapor floated here and there despite the battering downpour.

Things like this are enough to make the best of us believe beyond ordinary reason. Try and imagine yourself lying out at night, ten days' march from the nearest sign of relative civilization, with the jungle crowding close all around you. The decomposing forest floor gives out a strong phosphorescent glow, so that in the blackness all you see of your companions is disembodied feet moving in ghostly radiance. Maybe a tropical storm is lashing the trees far above you. Perhaps the Lights are on, or perhaps the howler monkeys are making the night hideous, like arboreal lions gone mad. It takes a lot of this sort of thing to get the uninitiated past the more-things-in-heaven-and-earth school of thought, if indeed they are any nearer reality when they are through.

Or suppose you are sitting beside a stream, as I sat one January evening waiting for the gallant little truck, its radiator battered but unbowed, to recover from an uncalculated nose dive. There is a half-moon, enough to light the still pools and turn the sands to silver. The trees rise black from pinkish banks, still as death; you can strain your ears, and the only sound is the complaining cry of a lonely tree frog, emphasizing the silence. It is lovely beyond words, and you breathe lightly lest the spirit of the jungle should notice your puny presence and do something about it. You also hope that the Motilones have not chosen to linger around admiring the scenery on that particular night. I can assure you that it needs very little imagination to feel something near you beyond the forest and the quiet-moving river; a very slight effort, and that pale patch under the cliff is something more than a heap of stones. I like it that way.

In September 1937 the first reconnaissance plane roared out over the Catatumbo. Plotting the line as straight as might be from the coast to the field, they established from the air the lowest point in the divide, and then aimed toward it on the ground. The Barco pipeline was a new departure in overland construction; instead of following the traditional both-ends-towards-the-middle system, there were four surveying parties:

two working in opposite directions from this central point, and two coming to meet them from either extremity, a method that probably saved a year in construction time. In May 1938 the line was closed; how, is something the people who sit in overstuffed chairs bemoaning the weakened fiber of an effete generation should meditate to their own good.

Coming from the west the surveyors, though held up by contretemps, had already done some seventy-five kilometers—down from Convención to the headwaters of the Catatumbo and over the range to the Río Tarra. From Petrolea their opposite numbers had thrust past the Río Nuevo as far as the Tibú. Between them lay the worst part of the whole route. The Petrolea party was bent on pushing on from the last stockaded camp beyond the Victoria, and the Motilones were bent on stopping them. It was a kind of deadlock, for the Company men were still trying to avoid hostilities and establish a *modus vivendi*, and although their overtures were ignored and their gifts left trampled and destroyed, they had not yet given up hope. When these efforts failed, they were at the disadvantage of people in the open against hidden enemies.

The Motilones are as savage and irreconcilable a lot as one could well imagine; they cannot be called poor, for they have no wants, but they are barren of even such rudimentary culture as most primitive tribes possess. Innocent of clothing as a new-laid egg, they do not even have any ornaments; their heavy bows and long many-barbed arrows of black palm wood are undecorated and—fortunately—unfeathered. How a people who could figure out windage and flatten the barbs escaped thinking of feathering the hafts is a mystery, but it is a godsend to those whom they attack. Such arrows have a very low range of accuracy, though if they hit you, they go through you like a skewer; it is a pity to spoil so many good stories, but they are not even poisoned.

All in all, I am inclined to like these obstinate aborigines. They may be inconvenient, but they are certainly consistent. The Motilones, in short, are gentlemen; they accept nothing from their enemies, they do not rob or mutilate the fallen, they are not indiscriminately bloodthirsty. As long as the white invaders stayed on the fringes of their realm, they left them

alone; it is probable that an isolated party going through might have been unmolested. But when, watching unseen from the safe screen of the forest, they knew that the newcomers were there to stay, building camps, returning day after day to the same place, darkening the sun with the wings of their giant birds, the Indians took steps. They are still taking them, refusing to give up a losing fight.

These steps are usually progressive, beginning with warnings he who runs may read; if he runs far enough, of course, he need fear nothing further. They follow more or less the same pattern from the Río de Oro to the Tarra: arrows shot at random into the camps, or planted, broken, in the trail; catcalls and whistlings from the forest. The Motilones have a whistle made from a nut about the size of a chestnut, which they call a *chokola*; no white man can raise from it more than a feeble chirp, but the Indians can produce a piercing note that spells menace, very unsettling when it comes from all around one, invisible and persistent. It is when warning arrows and the message of the *chokolas* have been ignored that stronger methods are used, i.e., attack from ambush.

Now this sort of thing, day after day and night after night, is wearing to the strongest nerves. The Americans had been picked for jungle experience and were not easily upset, and the Colombians who accompanied them had all the splendid courage of their race, but when the Indians fell on the Petrolea party one morning as they moved in single file up the last day's *trocha* to continue cutting, and only missed making a clean sweep of them by a fluke, it was decided to fall back. The surveyors retreated carrying their wounded, and began the slow business of clearing a wide trail that would make ambush less of a pushover for the little brown brothers.

In the meantime, a flying squad had been sent to carry out a kind of surprise flank movement. Led by a small and deceptively fragile-looking young engineer who could travel farther on his nerve than other men on six feet of brawn, it circled far to the south and came rapidly down the course of the Orú, at right angles with the line. They traveled light and fast; there is not much to eat in these jungles, but a timely encounter with a bear gave them fresh meat, and they must have thought nos-

talgically of those leathery steaks when the time came later on to take in their belts. At the place where the line was to cross the stream, a messenger was sent back by the same circuitous route, and taking bearings, they turned and began cutting toward Tarra, where the little party turned up a week or so later. This was doing well, but evidently they thought not well enough. Back they came to the Río Orú on their own trail, and then started out to drive a passage on to the Tibú and their stalemated companions.

It was thus that one day when the construction boss of the Petrolea end went forward to look at the remains of the head camp, raided and burned by the Indians, and to cast an eye at the general state of things up front, he looked across the deserted clearing and wondered if the fever had caught up with him. Out from the tunnel-like opening that marked the narrow trace of the forward trail came a file of tattered scarecrows, limping out into the sun from an impossible direction. It was the young engineer's party, back from the long trek. Chopping a way by compass through the mountains, fording rivers swollen by rain, fighting the forest yard by yard until they dropped, and rising under the relentless goad of their leader's will to hack through another difficult day, they had passed the Tibú and hit the end of the yard-wide advance trail miraculously smack on the nose.

They were a sorry-looking lot as they came into the clearing, emaciated and in rags, the soles walked off their boots, hands and faces scarred, gaunt cheeks covered with unkempt beards. They were worn to utter exhaustion and weak from lack of food, but they had kept their records exactly and they did not lose a man. And they brought in the instruments found abandoned and broken where the last attack had driven back the trailmakers. The line was closed.

From this point, construction was on. The way was cleared and burned, 180 feet wide; camps were established, cane and palm leaf ones for temporary use, tent-house and corrugated iron ones at key points. Landing fields were built at Petrolea and Ayacucho and Coveñas and Tarra, and a miniature one in the cup of the hills at Orú. Transport was organized.

During this period there were more than 6,000 men working

between Convención and Petrolea. They had to be sheltered, cared for, fed; since each workman got about six pounds of grub a day, commissary was no joke. In Tarra alone there were 2,500 hungry mouths; somehow, by air and by mule, fifteen thousand pounds of food had to be placed in them every day.

There had been some idea of taking material and supplies in by way of Ocaña, building a road from the end of the cableway that swings up in five hours from Gamarra, boiling in the sun beside the Magdalena. It was feasible, it was normal, but it was slow. The Company decided to do the thing by air, transporting everything in heavy-duty planes stripped down for freight.

The big tri-motor Fords brought in load after load of material—disassembled trucks and ditchers, barbed wire and dynamite, machines and cement and zinc, camp beds and cook stoves, cables and girders for the 350-foot suspension bridges. Freight for Orú, whose 325-meter runway framed in mountains was no meat for giant planes, was transferred at Tarra to shuttle ships: a pair of little red Stinsons that plied back and forth from morning till night, making as many as thirty-four trips in one day. All in all, the cargo fleet carried more than twelve million pounds in the period of a year—more than a million pounds a month in conditions that were far from easy. All of it was imported, down to some items that would surprise you. Machetes, those universal implements of Latin America, which, from the Río Grande to Patagonia, hang from every peon's hip with the inevitability of an anatomical appendage, come from Connecticut—when they do not come from Germany; the long blade that cuts a trail or carves an enemy might have been sold by Abercrombie and Fitch.

Soon special pipe trucks, driven by picked men who took the four-ton loads over that dizzy road built to accompany the line on close-reckoned schedule, were pounding from the Magdalena over the mountains. There were twelve pipe trucks, and they stopped for neither hell nor high water; add to that the transport camions, pick-ups and all the other traffic that poured up and down that narrow, tortuous track in countless numbers, and you can realize that the Catatumbo road was no place to take Aunt Ethel for an afternoon drive.

The line grew steadily, welded mile after mile, so that at one time there seemed to be a continuous trail of fire along the mountains. Behind the welders came the cleaning and priming machine riding the pipe, and after it the contraption that coats with dope—asphalt composition to you—and winds a neat spiral of tarred paper around the whole. A final wrapping of heavy brown paper, and the pipe was buried two feet underground.

This sounds fairly simple. But the way led uphill and down, through precipitous places where the cats could only work tied together like Siamese flies, down cliffs and across swamps. There are wide rivers to pass under, and pretty little streams that raise particular hell when it rains. There were—in fact there still are—those obstinately unresigned Motilones, moving unseen a few yards off the clearings, striking occasionally as they have done many times in the last six months, particularly annoying in the dry season when they range far and wide looking for crocodile eggs.

(Humiliating though it may be, I should like to make clear that although my visit to the Catatumbo coincided with the egg season, I neither heard nor saw the faintest sign of an Indian. At Orú watch was kept till dawn because they had been heard near by, but I had left at dusk in the direction of the Tibú; at Camp Nine they had been glimpsed the day before, but that night there were only a few faint animal noises to break the silence—though it would take some pretty determined chokola virtuosity to keep one awake after these long days. Stuck in the Socuavó ford after dark, a faint movement on the opposite bank sounded suspicious, but it turned out to be two truant peons sent by heaven to help get the pick-up to solid ground. On the Río de Oro the launch was enclosed with the very best hardware cloth—a heavy netting whose small square mesh is supposed to deflect any Motilone arrows harmlessly into the river—but we sat outside in sun-drenched peace broken only by potshots at egrets, snakebirds and an occasional somnolent crocodile. In short, my encounters with hostile Indians were about on a par with my experience in big-game shooting in India, when I sat up all night for tiger and only saw a cow.)

The last weld was in October 1939. There are 10,000 to

12,000 barrels of transparent gold-green crude coming down the pipe every day from Petrolea, boosted over the ranges by three pump stations. At Coveñas, the lonely port among the palms on the Gulf of Morosquilla, just east of Panamá, tankers from all over the world lie at the quarter-mile-long pier and take on 15,000 barrels an hour through the 20-inch loading lines.

Coveñas, created from the inadequate remains of an ambitious but abortive meat-packing plant, is twenty minutes by air from Cartagena, and with almost unreal simplicity, it is the nearest coastal point in a straight line from the Concession. The Company has an ingenious little table (which applies, of course, equally to their neighbors at Cartagena) to show that it is nearer to practically every city in the world than almost any other petroleum source, whether the objective be South Africa or Stockholm.

It is not, of course, finished. The pipeline and pump stations and port, the tank farms and road are all built, the usual claims of countless uncheckable squatters and proprietors along the lower part of the seemingly deserted right-of-way are largely settled, the inevitable widow with doubtful but inconvenient infringing rights has retired to unexpectedly affluent old age. But the wells of isolated Río de Oro field must have an outlet some day—to say nothing of the possible production of camps still undeveloped; when production at Petrolea increases with further drilling, there will have to be more pump stations. On the production side, geologists, retiring fellows who carry on in solitude and danger the all-important basic work from which wells and pipelines come, are busy far into the jungle, still the object of the too-assiduous attentions of the Motilones, and their work may mean big things one day.

But one chapter is closed. Orú, where I saw a million and a quarter dollars' worth of material and machines parked for overhaul on the slope inside the barbed-wire-protected clearing, is being abandoned like the small camps whose usefulness is ended, and the long rows of caterpillars, blades, hoists and so forth, moved out to work elsewhere; Tarra itself, in its beautiful and poisonous valley, is dismantled and the staff moved to Bella Vista station, 1,700 feet above. Being a natural pushover for camps, I am sorry.

It is now, at least for the moment, a question of maintenance. But that is very far from being the monotonous routine the word usually implies; a 410-kilometer pipeline in these lands is a difficult baby to look after, and one that seldom gives a dull week. To patrol every mile of that right-of-way once every four days may be routine, but it is not routine that tends to give men a bow-window façade. It will be a long time before the Catatumbo becomes a real-estate development or excursion parties picnic near the thousand-foot gorge of the Tarra.

CHAPTER XV

Black Gold

COLOMBIA, which ranks ninth among the countries of the world in petroleum output, has at present only two producing fields, one of which made its commercial debut in October 1939. Last year they recovered 25,556,000 barrels of crude, which is more than the normal consumption per year of Italy and over twice that of Sweden or Australia.

The two concessions—the De Mares, operated by the Tropical Oil Company, and the Barco, of the Colombian Petroleum Company—were born at practically the same time, having seen the light within two weeks of each other in 1905, but they lie in entirely different regions. The De Mares grant is a 1,264,000-acre tract lying on the east side of the Río Magdalena about 300 miles from the sea; the Barco concession runs along the Venezuelan border in the wild country north of Cúcuta.

Roberto de Mares was not the discoverer of the oil deposits to which he gave his name. That honor belongs to don Gonzalo Jiménez de Quesada, who in 1537 found a “bitumen fountain or boiling well” one day’s march from Barranca Bermeja (where the Tropical has its big refinery now) “yielding large quantities of a thick liquor that overflows the land.” The Indians “used the bitumen in their homes for anointing purposes, as it prevents them from being tired and fortifies their legs.” Three hundred and ninety years later that liquor started flowing down a 335-mile pipeline to load in tankers that take it to every part of the world.

The rediscovery of the bitumen fountains by American interests is a charming tale, which smacks of folklore. The Co-

lombian gentleman who was interested in finding a company to take over and develop the concession invited two American friends to come down for a shooting trip in the wild lands along the Magdalena. The holiday would do them good, far from everything that could remind them of the perpetual daily grind of their business—which happened to be oil. The Americans, whose minds were not a blank where Colombia was concerned, accepted with pleasure; a little hunting trip was just what they would most enjoy. The party was most successful; neither host nor guests mentioned petroleum, and a good time was had by all. In the course of time the de luxe safari went up the river and into the lands between Barranca and the highlands, where there are plenty of jaguars, crocodiles, tapir, deer and other assorted game, and where the trail at one point is saturated in black crude. The party passed over the seep, and no one commented on the odd phenomenon; very shortly afterwards, however, the junket was cut short, and thanking their kind host the Americans hotfooted it back to the United States. When they returned looking for the concession, they found their late mentor waiting for them, sitting on the title with a pleasant smile.

Tropical Oil was organized by the Pittsburgh firm of Benedum and Trees in 1916; in 1920 they sold it to the International Petroleum Company. Genealogies among oil companies are as complicated as those of Central European royalty: the International Petroleum Company belonged to the Imperial Oil Company, which—are you following?—is in its turn a subsidiary of the Standard Oil of New Jersey.

Up to the time the Standard bought the concession, there were three producing wells in all, and a total of about 66,000 barrels had been recovered. There are now more than 1,100 wells, 1,000 of them producers, and the Company not only refines and markets the greater part of the gasoline and oil consumed in the country, but sends (October 1940) 54,000 barrels of crude down the pipeline every day. In the fourteen years since the pipeline was completed, roughly 265 million dollars' worth of crude has been exported. The "camp" at El Centro is a little city, with all the services and most of the amenities of a modern town: attractive bungalows, hospitals,

schools, a golf course, clubs for employees and workmen, movies, etc. It is atrociously hot, but somehow very pleasant; it is also (as its inhabitants proudly point out) completely flyless. Barranca Bermeja, broiling gently on the river, has a refinery that handles about 8,000 barrels a day; a fleet of river boats takes care of a great deal of the distribution, which in this country of towering mountains and difficult transportation is several kinds of headache. Four hundred trucks and cars travel the 350 miles of surfaced road that run through the concession; a railway parallels the highway to the river, passengers being carried in an elegant and singularly bumpy speeder that caroms lightheartedly along the track from port to field in three quarters of an hour.

The pipeline, which runs down the Magdalena to near Calamar before turning sharply west to reach the sea near Cartagena, was completed in June 1926, and the following year it was looped for a good part of its length. There were no mountains to contend with—although the densely forested lowlands, soggy and intersected by lagoons, swamps, and small rivers, are hardly ideal terrain for any kind of construction—and the seasonal rains were providently absent; the entire job was finished in the amazingly short space of eleven months. This brief period, however, gives no idea of the months of preparation, when the engineers walked, crawled and hacked their way up and down four hundred miles of the afore-described country, establishing the route of the right-of-way. The pipeline is operated by the Andian National Corporation, Limited; its shops are at Calamar, where the line turns away from the Magdalena, and its offices and residential area (Bocagrande) are in Cartagena, near the terminal at Mamonal. Its contract with the Colombian government, quite distinct from that of Tropical Oil, runs until October 1973.

It is odd, when one has visited the field and seen the great derricks in hundreds standing against the sky, the refineries and storage tanks, the trains and trucks and spreading buildings, the hundreds of workmen streaming home at three-thirty when work is over (owing to the heat, work begins at 6:00 A.M. and ends at 3:30 P.M., with lunch at 10:30), to see the end of it all at the sea. There is remarkably little to look at: a tanker

crosswise at the end of a wooden jetty, the black files of loading lines running from the featureless shore to the mooring, the big flexible feeders that vanish into the bowels of the ship. There are no sound effects; the whole business has a silent, static quality, an unobtrusiveness, which is almost eerie. In this anticlimactic hush 9,000 barrels an hour are poured into the thirsty tankers, which can clear in a day.

The Tropical Oil Company's concession expires within the next fifteen years—there is some divergence of opinion as to the date, which has been variously interpreted as 1946, 1951 and 1956—after which the land and all fixed installation and equipment revert to the Government. Whether the contract will be renewed or not is one of the things that keeps oil-minded people speculating; any extension must be approved by the Colombian Congress, and from the national viewpoint there are plenty of valid arguments for and against renewal. On one side there is the natural desire of any country to control and exploit its own natural resources in complete independence; on the other, the advantages of a handsome royalty-plus-taxation income with freedom from operating care, capital outlay and the worries of distribution, plus the roads, schools, hospitals, health services and other plants and services incidental to such enterprises in undeveloped regions. The Company's godmotherish attitude in the places in which it is established has developed considerably of late years, and crops up in a variety of forms: in workmen's houses and donated post offices, in village churches and rural hygiene. The Andian Hospital at Mamonal, for instance, is replete with every modern gadget, and if its operating equipment is such as to make a surgeon's mouth water, its menus are enough to make anyone fresh from the diet offered in Colombian hotels positively drool.

The Company has another weight in the scale, one which in Latin America has even greater specific gravity than elsewhere—the personal factor. It is unusually blessed in its choice of representatives, and these in turn have had the foresight to provide themselves with particularly charming wives. Obviously, one does not become a front-line executive unless one has the requisite technical ability. But for executives who

represent their organizations abroad—and very specially, in South America, where the group of people who count is relatively restricted and such things have greater impact—qualities of friendliness, tact and social competence are as necessary as a sense of balance for a tightrope walker.

The Barco Concession was fathered by General Virgilio Barco at the same time as the Tropical's grant was made—actually, it is the elder by ten days—but for many years it was a case of arrested development. The General stumbled on a bubbling seep in the jungles near the Venezuelan frontier while investigating the possibilities of a cattle trail to the lowlands; abruptly abandoning his interest in cows, he started back as fast as good mules could carry him, to Cúcuta and the two weeks' ride over the passes to the capital. The Government, not unaware of the advantages of bolstering their sovereignty over a remote border region, promptly granted him the oil rights to a million-acre tract roughly the shape of California, and the General took ship for New York. Thirty years of checkered history ensued, not all of it pretty; the concession passed from hand to hand, and with it millions of dollars; it was canceled for nondevelopment and re-established in circumstances that have been endlessly discussed; there was maneuvering and negotiation as complicated as Balkan diplomacy; projects were evolved and abandoned—and through it all General Barco's little one-man kerosene still continued to be the sum total of production. The mountains of industry had labored and brought forth a particularly mingy mouse.

There was undoubtedly oil in them thar hills, but the problem that buffaloeed the would-be exploiters was how to get it out. There was a comparatively simple back-door route by river and lake to Maracaibo, but it lay through Venezuela, and the contract stipulated that a pipeline should be built to provide exit at a Colombian maritime port, while between the field and the coast stretched as difficult and dangerous a bit of country as any in the world—a region so peculiarly inhospitable that it had remained for centuries a question mark on the map of South America. Hemmed in by the Catatumbo, Barco oil was as distant and desirable as a princess in a dragon-guarded tower, and about as useful.

At this point, which was just five years ago, the Texas Company came into the picture. Combining with Socony-Vacuum on a fifty-fifty basis, they attacked the problems before them in the manner of a hungry man attacking a tough but tasty steak. In 1936 the allied companies bought from Mellon's Gulf Oil the two Colombian subsidiaries, South American Gulf Oil and Colombian Petroleum, rounded up the minority interest of the Carib Syndicate, and took over the agreement with the Barco heirs, who are the happy recipients of $5\frac{5}{6}$ per cent of the gross production. By the following summer things began to happen variously and simultaneously from Petrolea (the producing field) to the Caribbean, and after two fantastic years of incredible work, the Catatumbo oil was flowing to the sea.

The Companies maintained their original names. Colombian Petroleum is the producing company, with offices at Cúcuta, half an hour's flight from Petrolea Field and two hours by air from Barranquilla. South American Gulf Oil (Sagoc) built and operates the pipeline, with its main offices at Coveñas where the line reaches tidewater.

Petrolea, the only Barco field at present in production, has been averaging 10,000 to 12,000 barrels a day. Barco oil is particularly high grade, running as much as 49 per cent on straight-run refining; I have picked some up on my finger as it lay around a valve, and it was transparent and volatile, with a true gasoline smell. How much there is of it is anyone's guess; the pipeline can carry 25,000 barrels with the pump stations already in operation, and with additional boosters the daily load can be increased to 55,000 before looping would become necessary. The camp is a model of organized efficiency—well-built quarters, offices, machine shops, mess and clubhouse, a miniature railway to the river at Puerto Reyes, miles of roads surfaced with the heavy crude from their one low-grade well, a flying field, a radio station, a small refinery, a tank farm and pump station—the greater part of it created in little more than two years. There are even gardens. Here a hundred and twenty American, and numerous Colombian, staff men, and hundreds of laborers, work in an atmosphere as masculine as a front-line trench. There are no women in Petrolea—no women in any Colombian or Gulf camp beyond Convención—and the whole

area has a Llassa-like seclusion that makes even male visitors few and far between. When I went to Río de Oro, I felt like Younghusband entering the holy city of Tibet or Burton penetrating Mecca, and I would not have changed places with the Agha Khan and he winning the Derby.

Río de Oro lies half an hour by air from Petrolea, as lovely and savage a spot as one could wish to see. The landing field, cleared in level ground some distance upstream from the camp, is a clandestine port of call for the Motilonés. The special attraction is the windsock, which the Indians put to uses never foreseen by the manufacturers. Its nice yellow threads are the last word in elegance around the haft of a *moriche* arrow, and thus the stolen property is often returned changed to something new, strange and unhealthy, the symbol of modern progress unraveled to make a tasteful garniture for the weapons of primitive death.

The brief journey downriver is made in a sturdy launch with sides of stout, protective "Indian wire," and it is unbelievably beautiful. On either side the jungle rises a hundred and fifty feet, so dense the eye cannot penetrate more than a foot or two beyond the bank; the water is alive with fish, and egrets and snakebirds by the hundred perch along the shallows looking for a meal. In little coves crocodiles lie loglike in the sun, sleeping or guarding the eggs their casual wives refuse to care for. If the Indians would curb their penchant for fancy archery and the mosquitoes and other insects their feverish appetite, Río de Oro would be a jungle Paradise.

Nine wells had been drilled at the Río de Oro field by the beginning of 1940. What they will produce is known only to God—and possibly to the Colombian Petroleum Company on the basis of the tests made to date. So far, it is commercially nonexistent; no pipeline has been built from it and the only means of communication is by company plane or by launch up the Catatumbo from Venezuela. Geologists are busy, as they are in other parts of the concession; the wells brought in, of which it is said seven are producers, are shut in. Exploration is being carried on extensively all through the region, as by the terms of its contract, Colombian Petroleum must choose within 1941, in lots of not less than 10,000 hectares each, the 494,272



THE RIO DE ORO

On the right, the clearing cut by the Colombian Petroleum Company for a landing field. The opposite bank is Venezuelan territory.

acres that will form its permanent concession, turning the remainder back to the Government.

Apart from the two fields that actually deliver the goods, there is a good deal of earnest prospecting going on, so far without much reward. In the llanos east of the Cordillera, considered by many experts the most likely zone for discovery, Shell had two tracts for exploration where they have spared no pains to turn up something worth while, to the great satisfaction of the little town of Villavicencio, riding on the tail of the company expenses to the tune of 5,000 pesos a day. Richmond (a child of Standard of California) has two million acres or so between the Arauca and the Meta in addition to its leases along the Magdalena; Texas Company also has a stake north of Villavicencio as well as one on the river between the De Mares concession and Honda. Should oil be found in the transandean part of Colombia, it would seem that the transport difficulties faced up to now would be child's play among the roses compared to those that would confront exploiters in the llanos, barred even from the Magdalena by mountains 10,000 to 15,000 feet high. At the moment, the most promising exploration appears to be along the Magdalena from Gamarra to above Girardot, with Aguas Claras, the well-organized Socony-Vacuum camp, in the lead. The Monte Oscuro region, which aroused fond and premature hopes, is now out.

There is a good deal more to prospecting and exploitation in this part of the world than people at home suppose, and most of it can be expressed in dollars. When permanent camps are established far from inhabited centers, everything must be supplied from scratch—hospitals, power, telephones and radio, water supply and sewage system, commissary and schools, flying fields and shops, railways and roads. Even geological exploration is a costly and difficult business; there are transport and supply problems that can only be appreciated when one has seen the enormous distances, the soaring mountains and endless levels without roads or villages, the swamps and jungles of out-of-the-way Colombia. A wildcat in these conditions may well cost \$500,000 or more, and so far they have usually resulted in dry holes or salt water. And millions of dollars have been lost by prospecting companies who got nothing for their pains.

Labor is cheap enough; if considered by American standards—which, of course, do not apply—desperately so; although the pay given by the oil companies, a gross of 1.25 to 5.50 pesos per day, according to ability, seven days for six, compares very favorably with the rates prevailing elsewhere in the country. (In the Barco camps, the workmen and employees are fed by the company—and at one time, when construction was at its height, that meant nearly 40,000 pounds of food a day, most of it brought in by plane.) But the wage scale does not mean low costs when it comes to a matter of unfamiliar construction. Trying to establish a comparison, I asked for costs of tank construction, which are a perfect illustration in point. In Texas, five specialized workmen can build a small 500-barrel tank in a day; the total labor cost is \$60. In the Catatumbo, it took fifteen workmen—who had never seen anything resembling a tank before—three days to do the same job, with an American to show them how: perhaps \$100 all told. And the plates for that tank came across the sea, were transshipped to a lake steamer and reloaded to river barges in a long and complicated pilgrimage.

So if there is a chance of big winnings, the stakes are too high for little people to sit in at the high table. Within the last year, the Colombian government has indicated its intention of taking a hand; just when and how remains to be seen. In any case it is unlikely that the specter of expropriation will rise to trouble concessionaires' dreams; Colombia has an admirable record in such matters, together with a traditional respect for the sanctity of the law and courts, which, if they grind slowly, grind with a justice that some other countries might envy. Oil companies are not a band of white-robed angels, lily-crowned, but they have contributed enormously to the development of the country, and there is a general friendly atmosphere of reciprocal back-scratching between them and the authorities that makes for mutual advantage.

The Government supervises operations in so far as a check is maintained on production and on social conditions; petroleum inspectors take care of the first, and *inspectores de trabajo*, who seem to have about the power of the NLRB, keep argus-eyed vigil over labor. Altogether, apart from accessory benefits whose

value in hard cash is difficult to calculate, the producing companies and those engaged in hopeful exploration lay out in payments to Colombian nationals alone between fifteen and sixteen million pesos a year, without considering another eight or nine million paid to foreign employees in the country and presumably spent *in loco*. In 1939, when Colombian Petroleum's concession was not yet in production, royalties netted two and a quarter million pesos in round figures, and taxes were assessed at more than seven and a third millions. To be exact, taxes and royalties together came to 9,616,549.07 pesos—an income that has the effortless charm of coupon-cutting in the dear dead days when life was sure and the market steady.

There are some Colombians, however, who, although they realize that the concessionaires have done a herculean task superlatively well, are unenthusiastic about the whole system of foreign concessions. Not because the Government is not assured a just profit—it is no secret that surveys have shown that even in the United States, landowners reclining in graceful ease on their one-eighth-of-production royalties have rolled up more in net receipts than the exploiting companies who get seven eighths, but must bear all the expense of development and marketing. There are other considerations. I heard the question discussed one afternoon by a group every member of which had been educated at least in part abroad.

"No country should alienate its national resources," said one, a graduate of the Sorbonne, "it's immoral. And besides, it puts a nation in the little-brown-brother class."

"Nonsense," said a lawyer, Harvard '24, "it's just like leasing any other property. If you can't cultivate a farm yourself, you rent it to someone who can. It's not a question of honor but of convenience—and fifty or a hundred million dollars ready capital."

"The difference being that when you lease your farm, the land is still there when the lease is up. But petroleum is another breed of cat. In thirty or forty years, which is nothing in the life of a country, we might be able to do a lot; as it is, fifty years hence we may be importing oil from the countries that are saving their resources by exploiting ours."

A third friend nodded his head in gloomy agreement.

"We have sold our birthright for a mess of pottage; the generations that come after us will judge us when they are hungry."

We all sat and gazed somberly into our cocktail glasses, thinking of the meager future. I ventured a mild contribution on a more cheerful note. Aside from the chance that fifty years hence new sources of energy may make hyper-conservers look like hoarding penny-pinchers caught by inflation, there is plenty of potential oil land in Colombia, whereas the total combined area that is actually producing now is not much above 20,000 acres. In the topsy-turvy Andean formations and the almost unknown reaches of the llanos there may be riches still undreamed of.

"Perhaps," they said. "There is so much territory about which we ourselves know almost nothing. But in the meantime, the millions of barrels of crude that are sent out every year—more than a quarter of the total value of Colombia's merchandise exports—might almost as well be on the North American export lists. Take a look at the balance of trade, subtracting all the direct exportation by foreign concerns, and see what's left."

What is left, of course, is coffee.

CHAPTER XVI

King Crop of the Cordilleras

IN SPITE of all her varied resources, Colombia is in effect a one-export country. Cotton in our South, nitrate in Chile, tin in Bolivia—none was ever more absolute monarch than coffee in Colombia. On the books it accounts for 65 per cent of the list of merchandise exports, but that is only part of the story; in reality, it is something like 90 per cent. Because Colombia has, actually if not officially, a gross exportation and a net one, owing to the fact that all the petroleum, nearly all the bananas and much of the platinum—three products which together represent more than 32 per cent of all goods sent abroad—are exported direct by foreign companies. Within the country they mean royalties, wages, improvements and taxes, but as exports they are duds, for they yield almost nothing in foreign exchange.

All the other exports together—hides, tagua, divi-divi, balsam and so forth—only amount to a scant 7 per cent. It is coffee that has the job of going out and bringing home the dollars to finance Colombia's heavy import list. It does its best, but the best is not good enough. Seventy-five to eighty per cent of Colombian coffee is taken by the New York market, and for eight years American prices have barely repaid the producers. When the war entirely blocked the European market, overproduction in coffee swamped the United States; mild blending coffee fell to between $7\frac{1}{2}$ and 8 cents, and the Colombian government was forced to subsidize the shippers to the tune of two pesos a bag.

Since every cent less on the American price meant four and

a half million dollars lost to Colombian economy, it is easy to realize that the Washington-sponsored Coffee Quota Plan of November 1940 came like water to thirsty ground. By this agreement, Colombia's annual quota for export to the United States is 415,800,000 pounds. This is about 18,700,000 pounds less than the average of the last years, but it is over a hundred million pounds more than we bought from her in 1929. And the price in March had risen to 14 cents. If it holds, Colombia should realize on her 1941 shipments about \$58,000,000—which is eight and a half millions more than she received for her entire coffee exportation, including the now-lopped-off transatlantic trade, in 1938.

In the balmy, palmy days of 1928 and 1929, when North Americans were lending with carefree abandon and South Americans borrowing with happy confidence, no one stopped to think that someday the bottom might fall out. Colombian coffee was worth 20 to 25 cents a pound. If-onlys are a melancholy pastime ("history ignores hypotheses and knows nothing of alternatives"), but if the 1939 export *had* fetched 1929 prices, Colombia would have gathered in \$105,000,000 for it instead of the forty-five-odd millions of fact. The difference would have come in nicely to make her heavy gold export unnecessary, cover the deficit in her mercantile balance of trade and leave nineteen millions over for development and for servicing and refunding her debts—a beautiful dream that once seemed true.

Colombia is the second coffee-producing country in the world, but until a hundred and fifty years ago it had never seen a coffee plant. When William Penn, that close and prudent man, was paying \$5.00 a pound for the "infidel beverage," it was not Medellín or Caldas that sold it to him. However, coffee took kindly to Colombia at once, grateful for the exact conditions that suit its choosy taste: the uniform temperate climate of high altitudes in the tropics, accompanied by plenty of moisture, freedom from winds and good drainage.

The best coffee lands lie between 4,500 and 6,500 feet. Although Medellín has come to be synonymous with the most sought-after quality, fine coffee is grown in Caldas, the two Santanders, Cundinamarca, Cauca, anywhere in fact that the

altitude makes it possible. The obliging trees give two pickings a year, a main crop and secondary one, and the average yield per tree is a pound to a pound and a half of hulled beans.

On the whole, the small producer predominates. In Caldas four fifths of the coffee is grown by farmers who have only a few *fanegadas* of land that they look after themselves with loving care and no expenses. A fanegada, by the way, is an awkward unit of measurement equaling something over an acre and a half. In the Valle they look blank about fanegadas and speak of *plazas*, which is exactly the same thing. It is a little confusing, when you have dutifully forgotten all about those academic hectares and taken pains to think in plazas and fanegadas to find that you must begin all over again with *cuadros*, as used in Cundinamarca, for instance. A cuadro is a fraction over an acre, and it will support about three hundred coffee trees.

Cafetals, or coffee *fincas*, are always beautiful. They are all set in the mountains, and all green; the feathery shade trees, planted to protect the bushes and keep temperature and humidity even, are graceful and tall; there are streams brawling in the ravines and vistas of peaks against the sky. One can ride for hours along shady inclines, where glossy bushes, graceful as flowers in a bowl, climb the slopes on either side, and the air is sweet with a faint jasmine smell from the white bloom. It makes one wish that the courtly phrase of hospitality were really true: "Here is our boundary. From here on it is my land and yours."

The young coffee trees are transported from the nursery when they are about eighteen inches high, and do not bear fruit until they are three or four years old; they will go on producing, under favorable conditions, for as long as forty years. Coffee "cherries" take six or seven months to ripen, but they are an individualistic fruit, and do not all come to maturity together, so that each branch must be gone over carefully and repeatedly by hand. Flowers, buds and fruit are often all present on the same branch at the same time, and a loan on coffee should comprise all three: fourteen months' growth, or two principal and one intermediary picking.

The amount of labor involved in coffee is enormous, and its seasonal character means something of a problem for the big

growers. Between crops not much is needed: two hoeings a year, grass cutting and cleaning, pruning and so forth. But at picking time it is another matter. Statistics in Colombia have a what's-half-a-million-between-friends quality that is a little disconcerting, but according to the *Anuario de Estadística* the production in 1937 was four and a half million bags, of which nine tenths was exported. Four and a half million bags is 594,000,000 pounds of beans, and that again is between two and a quarter and two and three quarter *billion* pounds of cherries to be picked by hand, one by one. All this goes down the mountains over trails where wheels are impossible, in mud that often defeats even the mules, frequently in the driving rain. And then it must be soaked, peeled, washed, dried and cleaned.

The average daily wage for a peon is about 80 centavos—something under 50 cents at present exchange—plus a cabin and a piece of land to cultivate for himself. Since he works his land a day or so a week, has Sunday off and rests on Monday, his earning time is reduced to three or four days at most. There is meat on Mondays and Tuesdays, and a few rather gamey leftovers on Wednesday; the rest of the week is vegetarian. He grows his own fruit and vegetables, of course, and prepares his own chicha from the coarse molasses sold in high-smelling bags in every market place. Chicha is his stand-by, his consolation, his nourishment, tonic and enjoyment—at least all through Cundinamarca. The rough maize beer is the one thing he will not do without. Other regions drink aguardiente, or *ron*, or the corrosive guarapo, but except perhaps for this last, stronger alcohols seem to have a less deleterious effect than the mild-sounding beer. It may be a question of quantity, for the whole family consumes chicha by the quart as a steady diet. Men go off to work in the morning with a great jar of it over their shoulders, to be food and drink until evening; little children and even babes in arms are given it to make them strong.

Chicha is, in fact, a major problem, for it undoubtedly affects adversely not only the individual but also the race. Governments sigh over it, but they are not strong enough to do anything about it. A bishop of Santa Fe, overestimating the effect of ecclesiastical displeasure, forbade it under pain of excommunication, but was forced to let the order lapse or resign

himself to excommunicating the peasants *in toto*. Most people contend that if wages were higher, so that the peon could have something of comfort and relaxation in his life beyond beer, he could be weaned from his jar, and they are no doubt right. At present, however, there are two difficulties in the way of this solution: the inability to suddenly raise the agricultural laborers' standard of living without wrecking agriculture, and the fact that if on small wages the peon drinks four liters, on larger ones, as when he gets special pay at harvest, he merely drinks eight. A curious corollary of this is that when times are fat and drink more copious, sugar cane serves chiefly to make alcohol, and Colombia, of all countries, imports sugar.

Coffee costs are high, partly because although wages are small, the amount produced by each laborer is strictly in proportion, partly because taxes have increased enormously (or rather, have been applied, for once they were a dead letter), and mostly because of transportation costs. Before the sacks have reached New York they have gone on muleback, in trucks, in trains, on boats; they have been many days getting to the agent, weeks getting to the coast. And then they have about 2000 miles of sea, at freight rates that Colombian growers passionately claim are the highest in the world.

On the surface, it is surprising, when one considers that a cuadro cannot be expected to produce more than 400 pounds of coffee, and that the purchase price today of good coffee land is about \$150 a cuadro if not more, and that when prices are at the levels they held from 1932 to 1941 costs are very nearly equal to receipts if indeed they do not pass them—it is surprising that so many people have their land in coffee and get by. The answer is that they didn't buy the land, they inherited it. Also, many of them have some other source of revenue, professional or otherwise. The small proprietors often inherited their land too, or they took up free Government land, either by nominal purchase or by just squatting, and they hire no labor, or at most one or two helpers. Big landowners often have acreage in cattle and sugar cane too, and small ones have subsistence crops that take care of the actual mechanics of living. Farmers big and small have one great advantage over their city brethren: they may not have any ready cash, but they are

not under the same necessity for it. The good earth feeds her children.

Times look bright at the moment, but the lean years taught a lesson. And there is still the problem of easing off a production geared for a much greater exportation. Somewhere, there are 400,000 acres of bearing coffee land that have no present reason to exist. Unfortunately, land that is perfect for coffee may not be good for very much else. You cannot say, we import a tremendous amount of cotton, therefore we will grow cotton instead of coffee, because cotton obviously will not grow in those conditions. Something must be done, however, to diversify cultivation and reduce economic dependence on King Coffee. Stung to realization of the perils of balancing national well-being on the uncertain summit of a pyramid of beans, Colombia is undertaking to create wider and less mutable foundations.

CHAPTER XVII

The Golden Earth

ANTIOQUIA, "set between the famous and most wealthy rivers of Darién and Santa Marta (i.e., the Atrato and the Magdalena) is a rich, industrious and individual department. It has what movie directors and politicians swear by as the Faithful swear by Allah: personality. There still clings to this region of gold and coffee, of mountains and eternal spring, something of the country-within-a-country atmosphere that is a relic of the days when a man from Medellín, capital of the Department, asked if he were a Colombian, would answer briefly, "No, soy antioqueño." The Antioqueños, hard-working peasants and leaders with energy and vision, have excellent reason to think no small beer of themselves. Other Colombians say they avail themselves of it to the full.

There may be something energizing in the soil between the Western and Central Cordilleras. The aboriginal inhabitants of Antioquia and Caldas were a sturdy, warlike race that built fine timber houses and dressed with primitive elegance, though their virtues were marred in European eyes by a regrettable and insistent taste for human flesh, often exercised impatiently on provender still incompletely butchered. One cannot really mourn their passing, though there were faults on both sides; Cieza de León, always moderate, wrote: "Had the natives been more gentle, and of a good disposition, and not so bloody as to eat one another, and our captains and governors more compassionate, so as not to consume them, the land thereabouts would have yielded much wealth."

Cieza, chronicler extraordinary, companion of Cesar and

Badillo and Robledo, came through Antioquia and Caldas with the first discoverers. It would be hard to find a more careful and dispassionate observer of unfamiliar phenomena. The explorers came over the mountains from Urabá on the Caribbean, and both then and later when he went through the Cauca to Perú, Cieza described what he saw with scientific exactitude and singular lack of bias. It must have been a strain; even if the "great bears and greater tigers," the monkeys and serpents, were not unheard of, such things as boa constrictors swallowing live pigs and opossums carrying their young in pouches were strange beyond the wildest dreams. Yet his opossum is entirely correct to the last detail; his boa no longer or more capacious than life. When a writer says of a hellish march over savage and unknown mountains, "It is very troublesome climbing to the top of the mountains, and the descent more dangerous," you may be sure that he would not have approved of a much later observer, Antonio de Ulloa, member of an international scientific mission, who insisted on centipedes a yard and a half long and five inches broad.

This earliest Spanish expedition did not pass through the region where Medellín now stands. It was three years later, in 1541, that Jorge Robledo marched into the valley, the observant Cieza at his side to note: "When we entered the vale of Aburra, the natives took such a dislike to us that they and their wives hanged themselves on the trees, in their hair, or with the clouts they tie about them." Piqued, perhaps, by this evident lack of *simpatía*, the Conquistadores passed on to found Santa Fe de Antioquia, and Aburra was left to its own unusual devices for another century.

If the Bogotano is an introvert, the Antioqueño is an extrovert. "Loquacious, sociable fellows," says Eder, "shrewd as they make them, dearly loving a joke but more dearly a bargain, ever ready to swap a story, a horse, or a stock of goods." There is a vigorous, cheerful, pushing quality about them that is more northern than their latitude; Medellín is full of keen businessmen, making two pesos grow where only one grew before. They like money because they can do things with it, and life is no fun unless you are doing something. When one venture prospers, they do not recline on their success in genteel

repose, but go out and invest their profits in something else; if it fails, they are undismayed, and cast about for another scheme. Business is their sport, and they are extremely proficient at it; they establish themselves in other parts of the country and prosper exceedingly.

Other Colombians do not love the Antioqueños, and the Antioqueños do not care. They are so sure of themselves that they collect jokes at their own expense, and tell them to one another with glee; when the stock runs low, they invent some themselves. In Manizales I went to see the most beautiful collection of Quimbaya gold ornaments in the world, and as one marvelous piece after another was laid out, the proprietor, who has the holy zeal of the true collector, said feelingly: "I don't like to show these to Antioqueños. They don't love them; all they ask is how much does it weigh, what did it cost, and what would it fetch." My two companions, Antioqueños both, were delighted; when we got to Medellín, they told everyone we met. There is a story that the people of Medellín and the province are descended from early Jewish settlers; and they themselves will grin and say "Of course, we're the Jews of Colombia." Actually, although there are many names throughout the country that are probably of Jewish origin, Antioquia seems to have no special claim to them; the early settlers were predominantly Basque and Andalusian. They are physically well developed, above average height, and they walk briskly, work hard and like a good time.

The history of Medellín from the war of Liberation to the end of the nineteenth century is violent, rebellious and confused, but no more, and perhaps less so than that of the rest of the country. Twice Antioquia declared itself independent. (Once under Córdoba, whose moment of grandeur had been at Ayacucho when he rallied the failing patriots to final victory with the splendid and unorthodox command: "Arms at discretion! Forward! Step of conquerors!") It was among the first to organize as a "sovereign state" in the short-lived Granadine Confederation and the last to give up and agree to national union. But in spite of the general turmoil that reigned in the nineteenth century—when, as García Calderón put it, "in the conflict of incompatible convictions . . . *hidalgos* waste the

country and fall nobly . . . Colombia perishes, but the truth is saved"—Medellín found time and energy to develop and lay the foundations of industrial and commercial supremacy.

Where the un-co-operative Aburranos hanged themselves out of antipathy there is the second city of Colombia. The streets have all the contrast of the country; there are Spanish churches and modern buildings, some of them magnificent; gypsies in flowered skirts look in the windows of smart dress shops and pretty women reminiscent of *Harper's Bazaar* brush elbows with mulattos who stroll, baby on hip and cigar in mouth, in draggled nonchalance. There are purple-stoled priests filing between the taxis to an old gray temple, and brisk men—lots of brisk men—going about their absorbing affairs. Somehow, among all these, the *carrielones* seem to me a kind of symbol. These are the farmers from the hills, whose name comes from the hide bag known as a *carriel*, rather like a conductor's pouch, which they wear hairy side out hung from their shoulders by a broad strap. The *carrielón* comes to traffick, particularly when the cattle market is on; he strides along head up, purposeful and self-reliant, his feet bare and 20,000 pesos or so in his bag. He works hard, asks little, takes no favors and treats money as it deserves, as a useful but unexciting commodity.

Industrially, Medellín is best known for its cotton mills. Half a dozen big companies, like the *Fabricato*, have plants in or near the city. Here, too, the *Compañía Colombiana de Tabaco* (15 per cent dividends, with solid gold edges) has its head office—as pretty an example of national industry as one could wish, with its factories and farms all over the country. This is a truly Colombian enterprise, and by right of ownership, not merely Antioqueño, for of its 550,000 shares, 78 per cent are held throughout the country in lots of not more than 200 each. Twenty years ago, when the company started, it imported 95 per cent of its tobacco; now it grows all but 2 per cent at home—and very good tobacco it is.

Medellín is no longer a place to be reached only by the exercise of moral determination and physical resistance. There are daily air services from Barranquilla, Cartagena, Bogotá and Cali, and planes twice a week to Miami, Cristóbal, Quito and Barranca. The last lap of the trunk road to the south was

finished in March 1940; the road to the sea, don Gonzalo Mejía's pet project, has pushed beyond Dabeiba towards the Isthmus. And there is, of course, the railway to the Magdalena.

I have always felt that those garlands of memories of which one hears must be very untidy objects, and Medellín is no neater than any other garland source, but I like to string the mismatched souvenirs together and look them over. They help me to recapture the "feel" of a city whose charm—made up of fantastic natural beauty, a perfect climate, and the Antioqueños—is difficult to describe except by saying that it is one of the rare places of which one thinks, "This is a spot where I should like to live." There is sunset from the hill above the town, and dinner at the Club, and canaries singing piercingly among the tapers before the altar of the fallen Christ. There are conversations: with farmers about coffee, and a taxi driver about politics and character, and a discussion on the philosophy of design while sitting in the council hall of the splendid Municipal Palace looking at one of the most truly awful murals it has been my fortune to examine. There is a ball for the President, a warming example of real affection for those in authority. And houses, particularly country houses. The lovely country round Medellín is studded with them.

I think of wide verandas fringed with the yellow creeper called Golden Rain, well furnished with deep chairs and cool drinks, which look out over green valleys and soaring mountains. And of patios with majolica fountains and flowers in tall jars, and swimming pools, and rooms where the studied rusticity of carved furniture and native cottons stops short at bathrooms that rival Hollywood. I remember a garden where thirty thousand orchids bloom in the open, from which I went away with a florist's ransom, touched and a little confused to find in that bunch (cut in a "let me give you a few zinnias before you leave" manner) the giant shaft of one—the only one in the collection—so rare it still had no name. There is a vivid picture of a playful black stallion rearing on a green lawn among the orange trees; there are views, scores of them, of dramatic mountains seen across green valleys, where the foreground is usually pointed with banks of gardenias and roses and car-

nations. And, of course, ever and always in all these memories, there are the people who made them possible; people who do not take the stranger in to see their privacy stripped in print, but who are shrewd and kind and gay and friendly.

II

Antioquia produces better coffee than any other department of Colombia; it also mines 60 per cent of all the gold—and Colombia is the chief gold-producing country of South America. After unnumbered centuries of exploitation, the quantity recovered is constantly increasing; in thirty years the national production has quadrupled. Practically every ounce of it is now exported to the United States; without it Colombia's balance of trade would be a sorry affair. Every gram of the yellow metal, wherever extracted, comes to the Casa de Moneda in Medellín, to be refined and cast in bricks; in 1939 the quiet little house near the Church of the True Cross handled an average of a hundred and ten pounds of fine gold a day. Incidentally, no one in Medellín speaks of grams or even ounces of gold—always of pounds, as if it were a household commodity like sugar or flour. They say, "It's a good mine; it averages eighty pounds," and you know it means eighty pounds of refined gold a month. Mine values are also calculated in cents to the square yard, and anything that yields less than 15 cents is not worth bothering about.

The Casa de Moneda is an unobtrusive one-story white-washed building with a green patio and a general air of modest friendliness. Nothing could be more unassuming; the gates are wide open to the street, and there is not even the sniff of a guard or a policeman. I did not see anyone at all in uniform when I went to visit it, and those hard-eyed, two-gun men with their armored trucks and their ready feet for a loiterer's shin, that are so much a part of the gentle New York scene, seemed as distant as Martians. Not so much as a doorman stopped us as we walked in.

We passed through the office, which is about the size and style of a village post office, to a small and rather dingy room where dozens of thirty-five-pound gold bricks were stacked, looking glaringly artificial. Little piles of hunks and fragments

were lumped here and there like odd refuse. In a glass-enclosed cubbyhole stand the giant scales that can weigh anything from a gram to 2,000 pounds, and which always check right to a hair. Through the patio and a door labeled "Beware of the dogs" is the refinery. The furnaces stand in an unimpressive row, served by a few men in overalls; two workmen with vacuum cleaners add a cozy domestic touch to the scene. Around the corner, next to the kennels, is a courtyard with one or two shimmying concentrators, washing sand that sometimes runs as high as 20 per cent gold. In a separate, sunny room like a laboratory a girl weighs minute flakes of metal under a microscope and wraps them in squares of lead. The tiny lead packages go into clay cups and are put in an electric oven; with admirable neatness the lead absorbs the impurities and the clay absorbs the lead, leaving only a button of pure metal to examine for silver content.

The Colombian lower classes are so given to petty pilfering that one wonders whether it is not an obscure form of sport, for often the stolen objects seem valueless except as trophies. They can show a perverted and occasionally humorous ingenuity in lifting almost anything that is not nailed down (as when a thief got the policeman on the beat to help him jack up a parked car and remove all four wheels), which sometimes moves even the victims to admiration. But our refinements of banditry and gangsterism are unknown. Gold is sent unguarded by peon from the mines to the bank; it travels (without charge for private firms and individuals) by parcel post and is delivered in open carts. I would like to hear the comments of an armored truck crew if they could watch a donkey cart pull up in front of the Casa de Moneda and see the driver deliver his load, two bars at a time, making each trip through the gate, the patio, and another door while the cart stands unattended in the street.

The Casa de Moneda has a collection of ancient and foreign coins: great cartwheels called ounces, worth about \$20, tiny four-real pieces worked like miniatures, clumsy pieces of the early colony like Roman coins. But it makes no more of its own. The machines that used to turn out five thousand ringing gold coins an hour are silent, greased and waiting against an improbable day when their work is no longer taken over by the printing press.

There are innumerable mines in Antioquia, the majority of them placer. Lodes are hard to get at, technically difficult to work advantageously, and often concealed in formations that seem evolved by nature as a "keep off the gold" measure, but in the rivers, air and water have done half the work free, gratis and for nothing. There are some Colombian-owned mines that are definitely big league: San Andrés, which don Daniel Peláez took over in the face of sage advice, is said to pay a hundred and twenty to a hundred and fifty pounds a month, and La Caida, though extremely expensive to work (it cost around \$1.00 a yard) was so rich that nuggets could be picked up among the boulders, according to one man who worked there, "by the pailful." Most of the really big mines, however, are exploited by foreign concerns, who are said to have invested, first and last, some \$30,000,000 in the country.

Colombia has an enviable record as regards claims and foreign concessions. Naturally, in a country where the law has the minutely detailed precision of codes based on Napoleon's, there is always a certain profusion of red tape, though we are pretty good tape winders ourselves. It must be remembered too, that squatters' rights achieve extraordinary proportions, also that alluvial mines are not granted outright on navigable rivers and that at a pinch anything a fish can swim could probably be proved navigable. Once title is obtained, however, the only problem is to get the gold. Or almost the only problem.

The laws that have been recently passed to protect Colombian currency clamp down on free export or trading. Every grain of gold recovered must be sold to the Government through the Banco de la República, which gives the equivalent in pesos. Foreign companies are at present allowed 40 per cent of the value of their gold in foreign currency. Beyond this, permission to buy foreign exchange for purchases abroad must be asked of the Control Board and, if granted, used within twenty days.

Modern alluvial mining in Colombia was fathered by Nebraska. It was John O'Brien of Carmen, Nebraska, who first began hydraulic pressure washing in 1900; when he developed beriberi, he put up the money for the McGuire boys, fellow Nebraskans, to go on with the work. O'Brien and the two McGuires who did so much to boost mining methods out of the

medieval stage are all dead, but they must hover round somewhere to watch the big monitors blasting away at banks of shale and gravel, battering down tons of earth with disciplined violence, and smile with satisfaction. And monitors are mild workers compared to dredges, which are now used extensively. A dredge is not grubstake equipment (it costs around \$500,000), but neither does it give grubstake returns. Those in operation in Colombia probably account for two thirds of the gold production.

The sluice boxes often turn out pieces of ancient jewelry, or little amulets, or an occasional tool, like the jimmy in solid gold that is kept at the Casa de Moneda, and at San Andrés they once found a spool of golden wire hundreds of feet in length. The cannibal Quimbayas and Paeces and Panches and other pre-Spanish tribes had a very fair idea of how and where to look for gold. One of the largest Government-owned lode mines, Marmato, was a favorite Quimbaya source for the metal that made the ornaments and regalia that are still dug up from the graves of Caldas. Marmato does not give a particularly high-grade ore, but it has a rarer and more endearing quality: it renews itself like the widow's cruse. A working that has been completely cleaned out will, if left closed for four or five years, be found on reopening to have as much and as good gold as ever. This useful trick is less mysterious than it sounds, for the explanation lies in an extra-rapid oxidation process in a shaft exposed to air and water. It is almost a pity to know the answer to such a lovely miracle.

Although perhaps \$1,000,000,000, at a conservative estimate, has been taken out of Colombian mines since the Spanish came to the New World, there is still plenty of the metal the world loves waiting to be exploited. Efficient modern methods have been in use for about only thirty years. However, once the casual panning stage is passed, it is no game for a poor man. Transportation, upkeep and costs are too great. There are uncounted numbers of stray people armed with a wooden dish (the *batea*), a shovel and an old tin can who wash a few grams a day to keep body and soul insecurely together, but real mining takes capital.

Thirteen of the fourteen departments of Colombia produce

gold—and to a much smaller extent, silver—though Santander del Norte, with its 1939 output of \$16.50, can hardly be considered a bonanza. Of the intendencias, the Putumayo, largely unexplored geologically, turned out about \$58,500 worth, but the Chocó has pride of place.

The Chocó, lying along the west coast from the Isthmus nearly to Buenaventura, is as rich and as pestilential a strip of territory as ever roused to interest a miner or a public health investigator. It rains almost every day, and the average annual fall is anything up to 300 inches. In 1936 Quibdó, the capital of the intendency, enjoyed one hundred and twenty-five dry days—but in the rest of the time there were 784 inches of rain! Fortunately, there is a local protection. Inscrutable Providence, which so often seems to go to a great deal of trouble to create both an affliction and its antidote where it would appear simpler to refrain from both, has arranged that where there is immoderate rain, there shall also be rubber trees. From time immemorial the Indians used the *leche de caucho*, the milk of rubber, as a waterproofing substance. Cochrane, who spent his time in the Chocó in a state of feverish dampness, was understandably intrigued. "Put upon ruanas, boots, hats, etc., it makes them perfectly impervious to water," he wrote, and added, "I have no doubt that this milk will some day be in great repute."

The Chocó has a mean temperature (no pun intended) of about 85° and the humidity hovers around 90. This delightful region produced last year more than two and a quarter million dollars worth of gold and perhaps thirty thousand ounces of platinum. For years this strip of steaming jungle was second on the list of platinum-producing countries of the world; it came after Russia—a long way after, it is true, but there was nothing in between. Now, thanks to new methods of recovery, Canada has leaped to the head, and with increased supply the price has sunk below the boosted one of gold.

The Chocó has always been pay dirt. Cieza de León described it at the time of the Conquest with his usual neat accuracy: "Inhabited by barbarous people, who have their houses raised on great forked timbers like scaffolds. . . . These Indians are extraordinarily rich in gold, their land very fruitful, and the

rivers roll much of that precious metal; but the country is so uncouth, and full of lakes and morasses, that it requires much toil and lots of men to conquer it."

Platinum is never found alone, and for centuries it was carefully separated from the gold and thrown away. When Cochrane visited the Chocó in 1823 he reported on the mines rather disparagingly, noting with disapproval that some, neglected and carelessly worked, gave six or eight pounds of platinum to six of gold. Platinum was then worth \$8 to \$10 a pound in Jamaica—the only market, and contraband at that. Gold fetched \$200 a pound in Colombia and \$250 in Jamaica. Even much later, the Indians and Negroes were slow to realize that values had changed; at least one goodly fortune was amassed only a generation ago by a smooth gentleman who with a helpless, credulous air allowed the simple natives to palm off platinum on him.

The main fields are along the upper San Juan and Atrato rivers and their tributaries. The San Juan runs south, and turns to empty into the Pacific; the Atrato flows north into the Gulf of Urabá and the Caribbean. The two almost touch at their source. Both are navigable; the Atrato could take good-sized steamers if the entrance were cleared. The *Statistical Annual* of Colombia, always optimistic in these matters, states that the Atrato is navigable by boats of up to 1,500 tons for 550 kilometers, which is 38 kilometers more than the total length of the river as given elsewhere in the same work. Waterways are the highways of the Chocó; there are not more than a few miles of road in the whole 46,570 square kilometers of the Intendency.

Ninety-four per cent of the population is made up of the descendants of Negro slaves, brought in when the Indians proved unable or unwilling to shoulder the work of the mines. They look a great deal nearer to their African brothers than those we know, paddling their canoes in muscular semi-nakedness or swirling the two-handled bateas. Their blood throbs to the same instinctive rhythm of all the sons of Ham and beats in melody with the same ingenuous directness. In faintly archaic Spanish they sing of the things they know: of the river, and canoes, and forests, and the unequivocal passions and sorrows of the unsophisticated heart. Life, death and insistent nature

are all there, reduced to the simple terms of a simple people.

"If I were a little bird," sings the Chocó Negro as he dips his paddle, "I would fly to your shoulder. I would kiss your lips—ah, the pity that I cannot!" Perhaps in the evening, sitting together in the soul sadness induced by crude rum and the weight of darkness, the voices are lifted in poignant and embarrassing inquiry:

Are not Negroes too baptized
In the true baptismal font?
Is there some other font,
More shining and more rare,
Somewhere behind, beyond,
Where white men are baptized?

I who am ignorant
Would make this prayer:
If to be white is virtue
That I be whitened.

Now that what is referred to as the pressure of world events has made Washington twitch nervously when it thinks of the United States' dependence on the suddenly chancy East Indian rubber supplies, the Chocó may add another string to its bow. After all, Providence probably did not create rubber trees because of the climate, but the climate because of rubber trees. Everything depends on the point of view; from the standpoint of a rubber planter, the west coast of Colombia has the most perfect climate imaginable. Before long Akron and Detroit, muttering, "Now, why didn't we think of that before?" may sleep sound of nights, lulled by the comforting knowledge of abundant supplies just around the corner, and Colombia may have another export to take some of the load off coffee.

In the meantime, the "golden-sanded rivers" will go on rolling yellow grains, and with improved communications and methods more and more lodes will be discovered and exploited, in order that through a long and complicated process the proceeds may be once more buried out of sight and touch. Potentially, the Cordilleras are all a possible field; gold is where you find it, and the Colombians might echo the Cusco Indian who, after Pizarro had completed the fantastic loot of Perú,

took one handful of grain from a heaping measure and said, "This much gold the Spaniards have had, and the rest is in places we ourselves know not."

III

"In process of time, this will be one of the richest countries in the West Indies," wrote Cieza de León of the country that is now Caldas, the department next to Antioquia on the south. Caldas was the land of the rich Quimbayas, and when the first Spaniards came they were amazed—but not, of course, discouraged—to see Indians in armor of beaten gold barring their path. There were 20,000 men under arms, and even today there is a place called La Loma de los Armados—the Hill of the Men in Armor. The Quimbayas had battle flags covered with gold disks or stars, and sallied forth from their stockaded villages armed with darts, spears and slingshots, played to battle by pipes and drums.

These Quimbayas were cannibals like their neighbors, but they made more of their victims than mere nourishment. After fortifying themselves body and soul with his flesh and his courage, absorbed together, they mounted the enemy's head on a cane pole and painted it with dreadful artistry. Sometimes there were rows of heads, and holes were cut in the canes "so that when the wind blows, they make a hellish sort of music."

Here in 1540 the magnificent señor don Jorge Robledo, Lieutenant-General of the Captain-General Andagoya who ruled the province of Popayán in the absence of Belalcázar, founded the city of Cartago. "He arrived at the place with nearly all the near-by inhabitants, and coming to a tree blazed with a pike, in a loud voice that all could hear he said: I hereby found the city called Cartago by virtue of the powers I hold to do so, and in this place I found it and mark it now and forever after, and I declare that I take possession of the said city in the name of His Majesty. And putting his hand to his sword, in sign of the founding of the city and possession, he gave three cuts to the tree and said: I give testimony that this I do in sign of possession."

Robledo was an hidalgo of Spain, and perhaps birth and training made him approach the pacification even of the Quimbayas

in a different spirit from that of Belalcázar and Pizarro, both beggars on horseback. Mildness worked, and he and his men got quantities of gold in breastplates and ornaments and curiously wrought goblets. It was a generous country, with much game, and many fruits, and honey from stingless bees, and salt from the springs that welled up in the middle of the rivers. The Indians were well built, "the men proper, and well countenanced, as are the women, and these very loving," said Cieza. This affectionate disposition had subsequent drawbacks, for in 1546 a plague from Perú overran the country, announced by the apparition of a disemboweled man crying woe to the women of the Spaniards.

Cartago is the plane stop for Manizales, capital of Caldas, and for the flourishing town of Pereira. It would no doubt repay a few days of quiet visit, but as far as the tourist is concerned, its present destiny is to be driven through en route elsewhere. At least one detour should be made, however, to see the long low house, known as the House of the Viceroys, which is one of the oldest in Colombia. The façade is washed in soft yellow; there are carved wooden balconies where the governor's ladies could watch the passers-by; a coat of arms stands out over the massive door that gives entrance to a patio surrounded by spacious rooms. The patio is now filled with lumber and the rooms are stacked with furniture and a choice selection of coffins. You can go from Cartago to Manizales by train, but the best way is by one of those glittering taxis, stopping for lunch in Pereira at the impressive if somewhat bare hotel that is such a good example of the Caldense taste for size, efficiency and reinforced concrete. Pereira is a bright town, and the people have an unmistakable air of busy prosperity; it does not live as an adjunct to some near-by metropolis, but to itself, alertly occupied with its own business, and when business is done, with recreation offered by its country club and race course and swimming pool.

Caldas is very like Antioquia; it is the largest coffee producer of all the departments, and one of the four greatest gold producers. Manizales and Pereira are in atmosphere smaller Medellín, though they would not thank you to tell them so. The cities of Caldas were founded by Antioqueños, but by now

they have a lively local pride, and there is a good deal of rivalry between cousins. Some years ago, when there was a terrible air disaster in Medellín, the Antioqueños said that Manizales wanted to build a landing field on their mountaintop so that they could have a bigger crash.

Manizales is only ninety years old, and is built, for reasons I am unable to fathom, along a knife-edge ridge 7,000 feet high. Since the only way it can extend is in length, it stretches for several miles, slipping off the backbone of the mountain a little on either side, linked to its farther suburbs by cableway, surrounded by space and bathed in clear, cool sunlight. Across the intervening valley the vast bulk of Ruiz lifts its snowfields to the sky. Much of the city was destroyed by fire fifteen years ago, and has been rebuilt in concrete; towering in the center is an enormous reinforced concrete cathedral, constructed, like so much else in Colombia, on a foundation of coffee beans. A unique erection, which has already cost in its unfinished state more than two million pesos, it embodies reminiscences of many styles, sketched, as it were, in the plainest terms: vaguely Moorish arches and faintly cubist steeples, modernistic rose windows, and more or less Gothic porches. It has, however, the advantage that it can be seen from great distances.

There are good shops, modern offices, an excellent new hotel, an impressive Palacio de Gobierno and numerous factories. All of them testify to the determined industry of the go-ahead Manizalitos, to whom the future is a game and a battle. It was not, however, for any of these that I went to Manizales, but for something unique in the whole world—the collection of Quimbaya gold of don Santiago Vélez. I had studied *guacos*—the objects found in prehistoric graves, which in Cundinamarca are called *tunjos*—in a mild way, here and in Colombia. One, recently unearthed beyond the Quindío, which I examined in Bogotá, was particularly provocative. Its fascination is not because of intrinsic value—it is made of low-grade gold laid over a solid base of some dark composition—but because, in a bulk of perhaps three and a half inches by five, it proves conclusively the existence of pre-Columbian communication between North and South America. The *guaco* is the figure of a bison, unmistakable and exact—and there were no bison in South America.

Nothing seen before, however, in Colombia or anywhere else could prepare one for the Vélez treasure.

Don Santiago has been accumulating guacos with quiet passion for forty years. Not all of them are Colombian; he has a notable amount of Chimu and Inca antiquities: portrait vases, surgical instruments, dishes of copper and silver, rollers for printing cottons, cinerary urns, great decorated jars, statues of strange beasts and stranger humans, tools for weaving and dyeing. The Chimus (1,000 B.C.—1,500 A.D.) used pipes and printing blocks and mirrors of polished obsidian, and Señor Vélez has them. They are worth going a long way to see, but it is the gold of the Quimbayas that leaves one breathless, the carefully worked ornaments of a savage people whose only use for the yellow metal was to create beauty according to their lights.

I do not know how long we sat while piece after piece was brought out from cardboard boxes or paper wrappings. Small pieces, like the hundreds of nose rings of varying designs, were mounted on velvet boards, but an old shoe box would yield half a dozen priceless large ones. There were crowns and diadems and collars, polished or with repoussé designs; breastplates in various styles that no doubt corresponded to the changing modes of bygone centuries; plaques of all sizes and weights. There were necklaces of different patterns: one of sixty heavy, identical, three-quarter-inch pieces shaped like insects, another of two-inch anthropomorphic figures burnished to a high polish, others of molded strips or symmetrical beads. A newspaper parcel gave forth a magnificent idol, elaborate and as perfect as the day it left the goldsmith's hands; a cigar box contained a whole bevy of totemlike figures and amulets. There were strips of worked gold for decorating houses, and dingle-dangles for the eaves, and bowls of raw yellow gold or the *tumbago* mixture of gold and copper of which the secret has been lost. There were heavy-beaked birds like the Aztec Huitzilopochli, and lifelike crocodiles and frogs, and stylized insects that looked somehow unpleasant.

The nose rings were myriad, and ranged from small triangles a child might wear to great pieces a foot wide and heavy twisted bars that strike one as excessively inconvenient. A handsome pair of gold puttees with cuffs to match must have belonged to a

warrior of elegance, perhaps to the Prince who carried the fine gold scepter that was unwound from a towel. Best of all were the minute objects that mean such patient handwork, and all those that spoke of intimate lives long dead: the needles and hairpins, the perfect tweezers in the shape of a human figure, the skewers with intricate heads and the hollow jointed fish for holding cosmetics. It all brought those proper men and loving women of long ago very close.

CHAPTER XVIII

The Infinite Frontier

*Sobre el llano, la palma;
Sobre la palma, el cielo;
Sobre mi caballo, yo;
Y sobre mí, mi sombrero.*

Above the plain, the palm;
Above the palm, the sky;
Above my horse, I;
And above me—my hat.

—SAYS THE LLANERO, and believes it. The plainsmen of the transandean pampas are tough as rawhide, untamed as their own colts and proud as the devil himself. Born and raised on a horse, they add to the sinewy independence of all men who spend the greatest part of their lives four feet above the ground, a special naïve arrogance of their own, and their creed and measuring rod is *hombría*, which may be feebly translated as manhood. If you can stand fatigue uncomplainingly until you drop and pain with outward indifference; if you can go hungry, and keep going; if you avenge any slight upon your honor openly and if possible mortally; if you can handle wild horses, take your liquor raw, keep your mouth shut, love a woman, kill an enemy and die for a friend—you have *hombría*.

The typical llanero is dark, leathery, not very tall; his eyes are narrow from staring into distance and his legs are thin and warped by the saddle. He leads a life that is unforgivingly hard and spare; watching the cattle, driving them for months to market, he is the most solitary of men. At home—home is a mud-and-palm-thatch affair, or sometimes an odd construction

of upright poles set a few inches apart, open to all the winds of heaven—his diet is meat accompanied by a little yuca, plantain and rice; riding herd, it is just meat, often cured under the saddle as Attila's Huns cured theirs. By common standards he is poor, ignorant and desperately lonely, but not by those of the llanos, which are the only ones that matter between the Cordillera and the Orinoco. It would ill become the likes of us to pity him: he is free, he is satisfied and he is perfectly adapted to his environment.

Don Agustín Nieto Caballero, who has seen more of out-of-the-way Colombia and can describe it better than anyone I know, told me that when he first went into the plains he started with a faint inward misgiving. The guide who met the party at Villavicencio was an undersized, insignificant, weedy little chap named Antonio, who looked as if a strong wind would blow him out like a candle. He was to be their sole support for weeks in what are technically known as the pathless wilds, and a wispier-appearing prop would have been hard to imagine. They filed out after him in the dawn next day, and the plains had never seemed bigger or a guide smaller than when within half an hour of the town the llano swallowed them as water swallows a stone.

There were no trails, at most a few faint cattle walks wandered aimlessly to lose themselves in nothing; each scrub-bordered *sabaneta* was like the last, yet Antonio rode as if on an invisible highway. As the long day wore on, the vastity of earth and sky began to dwarf them. But not Antonio. He was growing. By the time they turned in under the shelters he had built for them, the supper he had cooked comforting their middles, the fire he had made a warming assurance against stray wild animals, the memory of the snake he had killed and the silent, swift-flowing river he had swum and the infection he had poulticed strong in their minds, Antonio was a giant. From then on, he was morally nine feet tall and a yard wide. When they saw the ugly half-healed scars striping his chest and he said indifferently, "A tiger—two weeks ago," they knew it was true. It is not hombría to hunt jaguar with a gun; the llaneros kill them with spears, perhaps in unconscious tribute to a kind of kinship that forbids unequal odds.

"What did it matter, there, whether he knew the useless things we know?" don Agustín said. "He had, superlatively, the knowledge he needed. He was a king, master of the world he lived in. It would have destroyed us; he made it serve him."

And that is why the llaneros have another saying: "Por grande que sea el mundo, me queda bajo los pies." However great the world, it lies beneath my feet.

When you come from Bogotá, the first view of the llanos is from Bella Vista. Behind is the narrow one-way road (mornings, ascending traffic; afternoons, descending) that from the *páramo* above the Sabana loops steadily downward for four solid hours. In front, two thousand feet below, the mountains sink into a level, mottled plain that stretches unbroken to meet the sky at the earth's curve. Huddled against the last hills is Villavicencio, capital of the Intendencia del Meta and jumping-off place for the Oriente. The road has been finished since 1936; before, one followed the trail that lies in a thin scratch across the face of the mountains and prayed that meetings with pack trains and droves of cattle would take place in the less impossible spots.

At first glance, the plaza at Villavicencio is extremely animated. This is because the first glance is necessarily in the late afternoon, when all downward traffic arrives; next morning, when the cars and trucks have left at sunrise to catch the open "chain" (i.e., *la cadena*: the generic term for one-way sections of highway, which are barred with chains at the control post), the square is a desert. At night the trucks are backed at the edge of the plaza. Cars that will be gone tomorrow stand along the curbs. There is a certain amount of sauntering, of lingering on the massive red stone benches, some street-corner gossip, and of course the inevitable blare of the radio. People go to bed early because they get up with the first light.

In the haciendas near Villavicencio the cattle that have made the long trek from Arauca or the Casanare are farmed out for three or four months to regain the twenty-five to forty pounds they lost along the way. That done, they take up the trail again, a hundred and thirty kilometers over the Cordillera to Bogotá, plodding along in woven straw boots that protect their

hooves. (There is probably a moral somewhere in this laborious and complicated march, the goal of which is the abattoir.) An attempt to send the steers by truck to the highlands was defeated by the narrow curves, and although one German hacendado of the Casanare uses his pilot's license to fly his stock, other ranchers cannot imitate this *de luxe* transport. These ranches, and the cultivation hidden along the river courses, are the productive fringe of the llanos. Some day they may find oil, and then Villavicencio will be on easy street; as it is, it has been doing quite nicely on the 5,000 pesos a day that Shell spent while exploring in the neighboring regions.

Just outside the town is the Rockefeller Foundation laboratory, the field counterpart of that in Bogotá. Here an untiring search has gone on to discover how, and by what, "jungle" yellow fever is transmitted to man. When I was in Villavicencio it was still a tormenting mystery, and one that had more than academic interest, since yellow fever carriers can stow away on planes and leap from continent to continent in a day. The Villavicencio laboratory has done as pretty a bit of scientific detection as one could wish to see. Innumerable forest insects were collected and divided into groups for experiment; more than two thousand wild animals were captured and examined for complicity as hosts. Before 1940 was out the culprits were found (two species of mosquitoes); it was discovered that such unlikely animals as capybaras, anteaters and opossums run around the forests with virus in their blood.

That beautiful road traced on the maps from Villavicencio to the Orinoco at Puerto Carreño is wishful thinking beyond Puerto López, but in summer one can drive to this unappealing collection of houses baking in the sun at the head of navigation on the Río Meta, and my friend Carlos Marchand, Genevois, merchant and crocodile hunter, volunteered to accompany us. The supply of crocodiles along the Meta and its tributaries is practically exhausted now, but there used to be good hunting, and Marchand organized it with true Swiss precision.

In normal times the world demands that around a quarter of a million picked crocodiles and alligators die on the altar of fashion every year. Values vary enormously, however, so that it is a chancy business; in the lag between skinning the kill on

the banks of some remote jungle waterway and getting the result to market, prices may have gone into the ground. The future handbags and gentlemen's wallets are harpooned at night, by the glare of a gasoline lamp. Skilled harpooners have an uncanny knack in distinguishing good specimens; they rarely make the mistake of dilettante hunters in killing that useless variety that resists all tanning by reason of a bony plate hidden in each scale. A less knowing gentleman of my acquaintance in Bogotá once bought twenty-four skins and sent them to Europe to be treated at one of the specialized tanneries in Switzerland. After a month in solution, they were as unyielding as ever, and the company asked for instructions. The shipper cabled, "Throw them away," and the skins were duly tossed into the Aar. But in the meantime they had hardened into their original shape, and a terrific sensation was caused by this mysterious invasion of a Swiss river by crocodiles.

Hunters avoid killing young reptiles whose small skins are less valuable per foot than older ones. They told me that a young croc when wounded will "cry like a child," scaring off the others for the night, but this may be a fisherman's tale to please the inquiring stranger. The Meta Indians are no good for this work, or apparently for any other, so Marchand brought in hunters from the Magdalena and teamed them with men from the llanos who needed jobs and were willing to learn this one. But first he got a boat.

In the ordinary way of things a boat is a fairly simple proposition. But not this boat. An inelegant, serviceable eighteen-ton launch, its history is an interesting sidelight on commercial organization in the back country. Marchand built it in Barranquilla, took it up the Río Magdalena to above Honda, and there beached it and sawed it into sections. The pieces were mounted on trucks that, backing and filling at every turn, got them over the Andes to Villavicencio. Up to this point it was child's play; the real problem was from there to the Río Meta. The road was not through to Puerto López—indeed, as yet there was no Puerto López—and the nearest navigable water was sixty miles away; the only possible solution was to try one of the nearer affluents and trust to winter floods and prayer to carry them past the rapids. It took three months to get those long-suffering

pieces of launch to the Río Guatiquía, and Marchand lost sixteen pounds in the process. There in the jungle they put their masterpiece together again and somehow, by skill and direct providential intervention, shot it down the rapids intact.

Marchand spends a month and a half to two months on each trip in his mountain-climbing carryall. Going out, the boat is loaded with salt, supplies and trade goods; returning, it brings the skins. Now that crocodiles are hard to come by, the wild pig and *chigueros* are receiving unwelcome attentions. The *chigueros*, more correctly called *capybaras*, are those peculiar creatures that live in the river banks and might be the materialization of a laboratory worker's nightmare. A little like a rat and a little like a guinea pig, they are as big as a good-sized hog. They are tame enough, however, and will let a rider go through a herd (if that is the right term) without running. Not so the *sainos* and *cafuches* (this last word is pure Muysca), the wild pig of the llanos. These are bad medicine and must be shot from ambush. The *sainos* run when one of their number is killed, but they cannot resist coming back to look at the fallen comrade, whereupon the hunter bags another. Since the *sainos'* reasoning powers are not on a par with their curiosity, this system works more or less indefinitely.

We passed most of the day in Puerto López at the café, waiting with tropical patience for our launch. In this part of the world a few hours' wait is nothing; time does not exist in the llanos, where it takes a week or a month to get anywhere and more to come back, and near-by spots are found to be three or four days away on a horse. In general this business of filling the unforgiving minute with sixty seconds' worth of distance run seems exhausting and pathetic to Latin America, and those who observe it are not men, my son, but machines. It is just as well to become accustomed to this attitude at once and save wear and tear. It is no good foaming at the mouth when you find that the reason it takes two days to travel a hundred miles is because the only plane gets in too late to catch the only train. Relax, and consider that we are becoming a nation of clockwatchers, slaves to a convention of measurement, anxious lest in some obscure way the gods should be annoyed if we do not feed the idol on the mantelpiece enough every hour. If a native of some

miraculously preserved primitive country whose times were sunrise and dark, sowing and harvest, should come to New York, he would conclude that our God is a Supreme Clock, the Clock That Never Runs Down.

Thus in the café perched above the boat moorings we did not fume and rush out at brief intervals to make heating and futile inquiries. We sat. It was a very nice café, clean and cool. The proprietor was a pleasant, urbane man from the capital; his wife resembled a character from one of the more passionate novels of tormented peasantry: a narrow, smoldering, farouche woman, beautiful and sullen. On one side of the room were small tables; on the other, the bar stood drowned with a National Cash Register, an Italian coffee machine, and an open-mouthed hen. There was a shelf furnished with a radio, some cans of American cookies, and, oddly, lobster, another hen and a hurricane lamp. A large and blessedly efficient Swedish refrigerator produced beer at regular intervals.

When it was apparent that the launch was going to be no more than an idle dream, we decided on a substitute. This was "el yacht Gloria," a large dugout with an ancient automobile engine casually mounted in the stern. It could only stay right side up if lashed to a scowlike companion named "Bolívar," and thus we started downstream in double-barreled majesty. Bolívar came in very handily when the temperamental motor of the Yacht Gloria caught fire, an incident that was handled with a sang-froid that seemed to argue past experience. The helmsman merely glanced over his shoulder and headed for the nearest sandspit, beaching the boats neatly without a word, while his equally collected companions wrestled—successfully, I am glad to say—to free the gas tank that was gently simmering over the flames, and I nearly backed over the gunwale into the river trying to photograph the whole business. We were towed home more or less whole.

The rest of the day was also basically a wait for the elusive launch, but it was more varied than the morning hours. There was lunch, served in a kiosk out of doors by the tigerish *patronne*, of which the main course was a particularly delicious fish stew. There was a siesta, punctuated by unseasonal crows from a rooster who took his stand under my hammock and gave pierc-

ing voice accompanied by the orphan obligato of a dozen guinea hens: papa, papa, papa, papa. There was the arrival of the fortnightly mail boat from Puerto Carreño ("Fine trip, twenty-one days," said the crew indifferently). There was a visit to a very sleek, very handsome and very misanthropic puma—a huge brute, resentful and magnificent. I wanted a picture, and the obliging proprietor at once arranged for an effective one. The door of the animal's house was opened, and he was stirred to snarling rage with a long stick. I was placed advantageously for an unobstructed view, between the stick and the puma. It is perhaps hardly surprising that the picture, though excellent as far as expression goes, lacks some of that crystal quality one gets by careful focusing. Finally there was a trip down river in a fine outboard canoe.

This time there was another passenger, who scrambled off as best he could at a point where a break in the vegetation above a red clay bank indicated the beginning of the trocha to the east. When he had clambered to the top and hoisted up his baggage (a spare tire, some tins of gasoline, part of a spring and a swollen briefcase) he stood on the brink until we disappeared around a bend, alternately waving and snapping a Leica, a small and infinitely lonely figure gesturing across increasing space.

"He seems to have become very attached to us in a short time," I observed, waving back vigorously.

"We're a symbol," Marchand replied, "he's on his way to Brazil by way of the Guaviare. He has a truck a quarter of a mile back that can take him sixty miles or so now that everything is dry; after that——" he sketched infinity with his hand.

We left Puerto López at dusk, a little too soon for my taste. Our host of the café was about to seek satisfaction from a neighbor for an insult to his dark-browed wife, and it seemed a pity to miss it. However, since I saw him alive and whole in Bogotá a few weeks later, the affair must have been settled amicably—or been very one-sided.

Toward the Río Guaviare the llanos merge into the dense jungles of the almost unknown Oriente. Beyond, far down in the southeast corner of Colombia, there is a wedge-shaped

salient that extends to the Amazon itself, and there on the river is Leticia, as inappropriately named a place as it would be possible to find. A few miserable houses in a fetid, inaccessible and God-forsaken clearing in the jungle, it is good for nothing in itself. Yet it was because of Leticia that Colombia and Perú went to war in 1932.

When an enterprising filibuster from beyond the border took a few friends and, crossing into Colombia, seized the village from the Colombian forces (i.e., four men and a sergeant) by the simple process of sneaking their guns at night, he started something. Leticia has no strategic importance; separated from even the savage Putumayo by a hundred and fifty kilometers of swampy, impenetrable jungle, it can be reached from Colombia only by passing through Brazil. It has no resources, nothing will grow there, and life is impossible outside the settlement. *But*, it is on the Amazon—the only bit of Colombia that touches the river—and since sovereignty over territory, however small, that borders the Amazon confers free navigation rights throughout its entire length, loss of this otherwise undesirable crumb of land was unthinkable.

Neither the Peruvians nor the Colombians realized what they were in for. There was very little fighting; even General Vásquez Cobo, sailing his makeshift gunboats across the Atlantic and up the Amazon in a Lochinvar exploit not without its element of comedy, never reached Leticia itself. The common enemy was malignant nature. This is the real green hell: sodden, festering and unconquerable. The ground is spongy even when it looks moderately firm; it is as if under the tangled vegetation there were no solid bottom. There is a portage between the Río Caquetá and the Río Putumayo at a point where their roughly parallel courses are only twenty-five miles apart, and here the Government decided to make a road. Riders could feel the macadam sagging underneath the weight of their mules and see plants pushing through the newly laid surface while work was still only beginning; the jungle pursued the roadbuilders, crowding on their heels.

Men who were there during the war have told me what it was like. There was dysentery and jungle fever and hookworm; soldiers brought in malaria and infected the mosquitoes, and

soon the place was rotten with it. The water was horrible and the food worse; the diet of the Indians was revolting to unaccustomed stomachs and there were no vegetables or fresh foods, so that the men developed beriberi. There were sandflies and bottle flies and flies whose names are unknown but whose bite is painful in the extreme, including one aggressive fellow with an inch-long sting like a hypodermic. There were assorted vermin and a wide selection of crawling things, some of them dangerous.

The mosquitoes were organized like German regiments. They came, saw, conquered and flew away in formation to be replaced by fresh battalions. Bathing was out of the question, for the electric eels would shock you to death in a few minutes, before even the sting rays could get at you to inflict their agonizing wound, and then the cannibal fish would flock to pick your bones clean as a whistle. When one of the military planes crashed in the river, they found the wreckage three days later, and in the cockpit a skeleton at the controls.

Men dragged themselves about, emaciated and yellow, with haggard, bloodshot eyes; prisoners and guards, equally helpless and miserable, struggled together to keep their hold on life. Those in canoes could hardly force themselves to the effort of bailing with their calabashes the water that threatened to sink them when the torrential rains broke.

Floods were the order of the day in the rainy season. The hospital had been hastily built in summer; when winter came boats were often moored to the second story, where they rode among the chairs, boxes, dead chickens and general debris. When the waters went down, they left a deposit of mud, rotting vegetation, filth and thousands of putrifying fish. The stench was appalling, and added to the general desolation.

Halfway around the world, in a snug city beside a Swiss lake, statesmen sat in council and considered the struggle in the Amazonian jungles. The League of Nations confirmed Colombia's rights in full; in 1933 Perú, under a new president (General Benavides), determined to abide by the League decision. In 1934 the "Leticia affair" was buried at the Peace Conference of Río de Janeiro.

CHAPTER XIX

The Valley

IN COLOMBIA, when one says "the Valley" it means the valley of the Cauca, the lovely, fertile strip between the coastal ranges and the Central Cordillera where it is always June. A hundred and fifty miles long by fifteen or twenty broad, it lies at 3,000 feet or more above sea level, a little Eden guarded by the Andes. Its beauty has not the intemperance of the selva or the bleak magnificence of the high plateaus: this is the Happy Valley, peaceful, fecund and comforting.

Until the turn of the century, this was largely cattle land, given over to latifundia, where life was patriarchal and unchanging. Cali was a rural center of perhaps fifteen thousand people; the Department of Cauca still included the greater part of the old *gobernación* of Belalcázar, with Popayán as its capital. Travel was by horse or mule: three or four days to Popayán, ten to Pasto, ten to fifteen to Bogotá. Agitation for a railway was already strong, but many people agreed with that hacendado who refused to allow a right-of-way across his land.

"But look at the advantages," urged the agent of the company that wanted the concession. "You take four days to go and come from town every time you have business to transact, and you have to spend four nights with different friends on the road. Think of the time you would save."

"Yes," the old gentleman replied, "you are quite right—though I enjoy visiting my friends. As you say, I would save three days. But what would I do with them?"

All this was yesterday. The Gran Cauca has been divided into the departments of Nariño, Cauca, El Valle and the Chocó,

with a piece given to Caldas; travel is by rail or plane or automobile, according to taste, and there is plenty to do with the time that is saved. As for Cali, backed against the foothills of the Western Cordillera where Miguel Muñoz placed it four hundred years ago, it is a city of 120,000 inhabitants, one of the most modern and progressive in Colombia. It has been called the Pacific port of Colombia, although it is separated from the ocean by a range of mountains 8,000 feet high, because through it must pass all traffic directed to Buenaventura. Even when the road to the sea is finished, Cali will still be the only gateway to the west coast, unless one counts the little port of Tumaco in the far south.

Perhaps even thirty years ago Cali still carried something of the impress of the Colony; now, quintupled in size, it has little of the mellow and melancholy patina of age. The rather featureless houses of Creole provincialism are still there; the *mudéjar* tower of San Francisco, the enchanting old rose façade of Santa Librada stand as lovely heritages from the past. Nevertheless, Cali is modern. If you have a nostalgic curiosity about that other world, it is not in the streets of the busy departmental capital that you will find the answer, but in the pages of a book. *El Alférez Real* is an attempt, unsophisticated and affectionate, to somehow preserve unfading and complete the last peaceful years of the Colony in Cali, the halcyon days when "morals were severe, crimes were rare, and years passed without a homicide or a theft."

In those idyllic times hidalgos walked the unpaved *calles* in coats of velvet or scarlet broadcloth embroidered and buttoned with gold, and satin breeches buckled at the knee; their capes were of velvet bordered in gold and silver, their waistcoats of flowered silk, and the ruffles of their shirts were of the finest batiste. Their ladies were no less gorgeous; the elaborate, many-petticoated dresses were made of bright stuffs adorned with gold and silver, or gold-flowered brocade, or gleaming lampassé. Men and women wore identical high-crowned beaver hats on their powdered hair, and when the streets were muddy, they changed their gold-buckled shoes for heavy wooden clogs. The less wealthy citizens wore as rich clothes as they could, and the peasants dressed in homespun

cotton or wool, in colors as brilliant as those affected by their betters.

All this magnificence sounds remarkably hot. Perhaps that impeccable Caleño morality was due to the amount of potentially dangerous energy consumed in carrying these sartorial burdens. Certainly it must have been extraordinarily expensive, but then, apart from clothes, life was unbelievably cheap. An *arroba* (25 pounds) of beef was worth 20 cents; an arroba of plantains, 5 cents; as much wood as an ass could carry, 5 cents. A fat heifer brought \$5.00; a good horse, \$8.00. And at that, the cost of living had gone up.

Lest the price of progress seem too great, these values can be compared to those at the time of the Conquest. "The Spaniards value money no more than dirt when they want anything," noted Cieza de León, a careful man, and added that a pig fetched 500 pieces of eight; a sheet of paper, 30 pieces of eight; a needle for making alpargatas, 30; and a horse (whose purchaser, pursued for debt, often could not enjoy him) 4,000. In 1538 don Jorge Robledo paid 1,600 pieces of eight for a sow and a pig. He bought them from the estate of a fallen comrade, though there seems a suspicion that Belalcázar got the money; the sow was later the *pièce de résistance* at a banquet—attended, no doubt, by the twenty-three settlers of Cali, already established with estates and slaves.

There is one tangible inheritance from the days of the *gober nación* which by rights should have a chapter to itself: the statue of the Madonna in La Merced called Our Lady of Healing, which the Indians knew as the Lady of the Mountain. The Mother and Child are sculptured rather more than half life size, in flint. In this difficult medium the artist contrived to chisel an easy naturalness of pose and gesture, flowing folds of drapery and delicate features stamped with an expression of happy tenderness. But who he was, or how and when he did it, is an unsolved and tormenting mystery.

The holy figures were discovered in 1580 in a wild part of the Western Cordillera where no white man had been known to penetrate—a territory whose only inhabitants were Indians imperfectly emerged from cannibalism. And they had not been carried to their inaccessible retreat, but cut in the living rock.

The Indians said that they had been there as long as anyone remembered, and even a short memory at that time could go back beyond the Conquest. With considerable difficulty the statue (which weighs about two and a half tons) was cut from its natural base and brought by carriers, a league a day, to Cali. Twice thereafter it disappeared in the night; once it was found again in its original site, once halfway along the route to the peaks.

I have no explanation to offer. Just to make it harder, I might add that now that it has been colored, the sculpture looks remarkably like the works of South German artists of the late fifteenth century.

With the first dawn of the revolution Cali shook off the plump *quieta non muovere* of two hundred and fifty years and threw itself enthusiastically into the fight. The Valley Creoles, who had lived for generations in the cotton wool of uneventful ease, untroubled by anything beyond family affairs or an epidemic of foot-and-mouth disease, were transformed overnight into fanatic rebels. El Valle paid dear for freedom. Caucanos stripped themselves of money and possessions to further the cause, and when the tide turned against them, the Spaniards took what was left.

The reconquering royalists were thorough. "In all the pastures of the Valley these tyrants did not leave a single head of cattle, or a horse, or a sheep, of all that had been there. . . . Warleta [the royalist commandant] sent ten cases of jewels and \$500,000 to Morillo from the Valley." "When Warleta arrived, he did not find one able-bodied man in Cali: all of them had gone to the war." He found a remarkably stubborn lot of women, however, who did everything in their power to hamper the Spaniards. When news came through of the victory of Boyacá, it was "a guerrilla largely composed of women determined to give no quarter" that waylaid the Spanish governor as he marched from Popayán, killing him and routing his escort.

The most striking thing about Cali today is not the plaza with its imposing government buildings and rows of taxis, or the avenues of giant palms, or the suburbs with their modern villas, or the churches, whose bells chime melodies instead of

clanging as in Bogotá, or the busy factories. It is the pervasive air of cheerfulness, almost of gaiety. Not that it is a city of many amusements; Cali is not gay by virtue of commercial facilities for organized diversion, but by the grace of God.

Just what makes this buoyant atmosphere is hard to say. It is partly the light and sun and soft intensity of color, and partly the temperature: summer, but not dog-day summer. Some of it might even be the cleanliness. Colombian towns are usually neat, but Cali is so clean you notice it. Much of it is the fact, evident to any visitor after a day in the city, that Caleña mentality is tuned to confidence. The effects of climate, so often mentioned, fail to run true to form. The Valle capital is only three and a half degrees off the Equator, and by all the canons, its even, perpetual heat should breed indolence; yet the distinguishing inertia traditional to the tropics is noticeably absent. Cali, if not exactly bustling, is undoubtedly wide awake. Shops are larger, airier, better arranged than in other cities. (For what it is worth, I may remark that I had the only electrical manicure of my life in Cali.)

Not all the energetic businessmen are Caucanos. Some—more perhaps than the natives would wish—are Antioqueños, as usual a little more enterprising than the next person. Some are foreigners: American, English, German, Italian, “Polaqui.” The Caleño himself, however, is a sufficiently energetic *comerciante* to feel something of that faint irritation toward Bogotá which marks the people of Medellín, and to be judged in turn as regrettably materialistic by the pundits of the Capital.

Caleños are not free from the regionalism that still affects Colombia. “*La vorágine?*” said one to me, playing on the title of Rivera’s famous book, “the true vortex is not the Oriente. It is Bogotá!” They are convinced that the effete bureaucrats of the capital (who may be from the Valley themselves, but who are mysteriously transmogrified by absorption into the Bogotano scheme of things) grind down the faces of the Valle-caucanos, willfully stifling their progress. As an illustration, they cite the *carretera al mar*, the highway to the sea at Buenaventura, a project passionately favored by Cali and somewhat tepidly advanced by Bogotá. It has been promised that the last difficult section of the road—the passage of the Boquerón—

will be finished before 1942. The advantages may be great (except to the Government-owned railway) but undoubtedly the dear, long-standing grievance is going to be missed.

The Caucaño proletariat is a mixture of Spanish, Negro and Indian, with the mulatto type predominating. The Ibero-African blend has been very satisfactory in Colombia, frequently resulting in exceptional energy and mental accomplishment, but it must be admitted that the rural population of the Valley is not imbued with the same go-get spirit as the metropolitan one. Why should it be? The necessities of physical life are there for the taking, and the exigencies of the mind do not trouble them.

Cauca soil is generous and undemanding; an occasional rest, and it will produce year after year almost indefinitely without fertilizing. It is too good to leave in pasturage, and although there is still plenty of good grass, both natural and planted, the cattle lands are shrinking. Not everything yields bumper harvests in the Valley, but crops that like the climate prosper mightily. Cane is sweeter, plantains are bigger, banana stems heavier than elsewhere; tobacco, the sweet black tobacco that is milder than it looks, flourishes, as does maize; fruits grow in profusion, and subsistence crops come up almost by themselves. And the Valley earth is not just surface-rich; it holds coal in abundance, iron and gold. Smallest, bar one, of all the departments, El Valle accounts for one tenth of the national wealth.

There are famous haciendas in the flat green country near Cali. One is El Paraíso, home of María, the protagonist of Jorge Isaac's famous novel, beloved by every Colombian and doubly so by the people of the Valley. Another, Cañasgordas, is the estate where the future bishop of Cuenca and Quito, don José de Cuero y Cayzedo, took refuge when he fled the wrath of the Bishop Sobrino y Minayo. Don José "hid" for eight years in and about Cali, known to every Caleño and betrayed by none, until one day the Alférez Real, his brother-in-law, galloped to Cañasgordas and leaping from his horse, cried: "Open, Cuñado, the Royal decree acquits you!" To which the priest answered simply: "So it had to be. God does not permit injustice." The Bishop died a patriot in a Spanish prison in Lima, still fighting

for the truth as he saw it at eighty years of age. Cayzedos, or Caicedos, there is a string of gallant men and women of that name who shine in Colombian history; don José belonged to a family of which Colombia is justly proud.

Today the most important, if not the most characteristic, hacienda of the Valley is La Manuelita, near the town of Palmira, the largest sugar producer in Colombia. La Manuelita is more than a plantation and a mill, however. It is a monument to dogged faith and effort, a success story with a moral. More particularly it is the Eders: James Eder, his sons, and their children.

When James Eder decided to build a sugar refinery forty years ago, people shook their heads. All that money and work for a product nobody used! Panela was cheap, it was easy and it was overpoweringly sweet: what more could one ask? And anyway, it was what the consumer wanted. The Eders did not argue; they were too busy. Every piece of material had to be brought from England ("Nearly all machinery is ordered from London," says Miller, "as it can be had more quickly and better packed than from the United States"), unloaded at Buenaventura, and from there taken over the break-neck trails across the western Andes by pack train. At one time, don Santiago (James) owned 1,200 mules and 600 oxen, plus what he hired, for transport use. All grazing between the hacienda and the coast was leased, for after each trip the mules had to be turned out to grass for six weeks to recuperate from the journey and the fodderless days in the Boquerón. It took just three years to bring everything from Buenaventura to Palmira.

La Manuelita's 7,000 acres feed the mill all the year round, regardless of season, and the mill can feed the market close on 200,000 pounds of sugar a day. Fertilizing—an item that in many countries takes \$30 or so an acre from the planters' pocket every year—is unnecessary; with periods of rest, the Valley sugar-cane lands have produced steadily for a century and more. And what cane! . . . It stands fifteen feet and over, and is said to have the highest sugar content of any in the world.

La Manuelita, with its modern mill, its organized efficiency, its model laborers' quarters and spacious staff bungalows, its



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miles of decauville, its 70 employees and 850 peons, is not a typical hacienda. It is not even just a highly successful commercial venture. It is both an example of what can be done in Colombia if there is the will—and the means—to do it, and a demonstration of the best kind of co-operation between foreigners and Colombians. The Eders—like the Grangers, who knew the country almost mile by mile, and the Flys of Santa Marta—have put down roots in Colombia; developing, not exploiting, giving as well as taking.

Palmira is a typical Valley town, with a dense green plaza, a cathedral built of big red country bricks, and a number of rather draggled barouches drawn by pairs of seedy ponies, and the road from there to Cali is like all Valley roads—level, dusty or muddy according to the weather, bordered with trees and hedges. The occasional ranchitos beside the highway are small and dilapidated, but what does a cracked wall or sagging thatch matter? They have flowers. Crimson and purple bougainvillia breaks over them in waves; cup-of-gold drips from the eaves; trumpet flower, the waxy bells hanging on the branches as if each one had been tied on separately, stand before the door. In plots near the cabins, there are poinsettia bushes, gardenias, odd-looking plants with sword-shaped reddish leaves or stiff crimson tufts. Trees are not merely green in this colorful land: they have magenta leaves and carmine flowers, or feathery green-white blooms, or pale clusters of pink; or they are starred with flowers in a lovely and unlikely shade of blue. Here and there one finds a *cochimba*, tall and arrogant and magnificently scarlet. Bamboo grows fifty feet high, organ cactus makes towering perpendicular hedges.

The horses that graze along the road are often a painful contrast to all this exuberant growth. Either the campesinos take more trouble over flowers than over livestock, or the flowers, like so many apparently delicate creatures, are better able to look after themselves. Many of the horses are little more than skeletons, consumed by a kind of mange called locally *chucha*, and the cattle, standing knee deep in stiff grass, while they are fat enough, are frequently infested with ticks. Profits from cattle may be greater in the green and level Cauca than in other parts of the country (where they are surprisingly small), but

they could undoubtedly be bettered. The day of Elsie-cows has not yet dawned in Colombia.

Neatly arranged in expectant piles, I have a store of statistics about agricultural costs and yields, annual mineral production and industrial development over the last twenty years in the Valley. They have been quietly and respectfully buried; I cannot see Cali through a veil of tables and percentages, and neither could anyone else. I see it in the light of friendship, by incidents, in scenes with or without sound effects that have taken on a repoussée clarity as the surrounding detail fades, and that is probably the only way it can be passed on.

One of my Cali scenes is in a long, cool drawing room, combining hot-country simplicity with an easy yet finished elegance—like its mistress. This is a conversation piece. The talk was about the war, and certain modern French writers, and the sextupled cost of farm land in Colombia, and the peculiar coloring of unborn tapirs, and how perfectly marvellous the chocolate and whipped cream is at Hanselmann's in St. Moritz after a day's skiing. It turned to discussion of the role of the United States in the future of the Americas, and of the changing mental habits of both continents. It touched on favorite London restaurants and the effect of the moon on seed time and harvest. *That*, I hold, is conversation. Another scene is a pair of rooms off a sunny patio, lined with shelves and cabinets, containing an eclectic collection of curios, antiquities, objets d'art, autographs, rare books and old weapons—a fascinating place to which its amiable owner should certainly never admit guests he is not prepared to have around for several hours. I stayed around for two days and only scratched the surface.

Then there is a picture of tea in the sunset beside a pool, with the jasmine scent of *camea* trees heavy in the air, and one of a very satisfactory game of castles in Spain, played with proper seriousness and attention to detail on the top of a white marble café table, the subject being a dream hacienda of mine in a certain hidden valley of the south. There is a series of snapshots, representing polite, but firm disinfections against the then-prevalent infantile paralysis, consisting of picric acid sprayed up the nose—probably of greater moral than prophylactic effect. There is one which might be called an action short,

in which I play a thoroughly discreditable and hitherto unrevealed part. Perhaps it is time to salve my conscience with public confession.

In this scene, a dishevelled figure—me—alternately crawls and pounces about the tiled expanse of a very large and very perfectly appointed bathroom. The quarry is two fleas, imported unknowingly on my own person from another province, and the reason they were unloosed in someone else's superlative house was that my hostess, a consistently thoughtful woman to whom I owe many of my pleasant Cali memories, had remarked when tea was over: "Tell me, how long is it since you had a real bath?"

This perfectly logical question was prompted by the knowledge that I had just come from a place where baths are only a tale that is told and ablutions, based on a tin basin about the size of a soup plate, are necessarily unsatisfactory and sectional. It was followed by an offer anyone fresh from a long season of Colombian hotels, who had almost forgotten what it is like to bathe in any but an upright, or shower, position, must have found irresistible: "a nice hot *tub*." It was thus that as I took off my dress the two little aliens jumped out; fleas are allergic to me and they were delighted to leave. The case was hopeless from the start; agile, mountain specimens, they defied capture. There I had to leave them, keeping shamed silence about the whole affair and praying that they were not of assorted genders.

There are other pictures, many of them, that I like to look at, but on the whole they merge into one composition: a kind of photomontage of green levels and cloud-topped mountains, of hospitable houses where one is made to feel not just a guest but a friend, and, most of all, of people one hopes to see again. Together they explain why an American friend, long resident of the Valley, when I asked him where he would choose to live if he suddenly inherited ten million dollars, thought a moment and replied: "I guess Cali."

It requires a slight effort to remember that El Valle is not all comprised in the rich levels along the Río Cauca. As an administrative department, it includes a hundred and thirty miles of the line of the Western Cordillera, together with that part

of the Pacific Coast between the San Juan River and Boca de Naya. In this stretch, a hundred odd miles over the range from Cali, is the port of Buenaventura. Except for Tumaco, it is Colombia's only outlet to the Pacific, but in spite of its new docks and warehouses, it is not a town in which Colombians have any particular pride. (The disadvantages of an unattractive port are greater than might be supposed. I know of at least three distinguished writers who based their entire—unfavorable—accounts of the country on a few hours' shore visit at Puerto Colombia and Buenaventura.) Buenaventura Bay is beautiful—according to Eder, the most beautiful west South American harbor—and the town, like all Colombian towns, has been considerably cleaned up, both in appearance and in the more important matter of sanitation and hygiene, but (partly because I really know very little about it) it can perhaps be left with the same statement as Cieza de León wrote four hundred years ago:

"I make no particular chapter of this port, because there is nothing to be said of it."

The west coast is still *terra incognita* for most Colombians, who have been too occupied in improving the more get-at-able portions of their country to devote time and funds to the deserted selvas of an isolated tropical shore. Except for a few villages, principally of ex-slaves who have returned to the carefree life of their ancestors, the Pacific border of Colombia is not much changed from when Andagoya first skirted it in 1522. Gorgona Island, "high and never free from thunder and rain, as if the elements were in continual struggle among themselves" (it is Cieza speaking again), is still practically uninhabited. The few pearl fishers who have their huts there do not know, and would not care, that "here the Marquis don Francisco Pizarro lived a long time, with thirteen Spaniards his companions, who were the discoverers of this country we call Perú."

It is not a desert land, however, or even a niggardly one. There is a lot of rubber in those forests, and tagua, and a kind of dwarf coconut palm bearing fruit the size of a man's hand which is unusually rich in oil. It may be that other jungle products—fibers and woods and essences—can be developed;

paddy fields might fill the Patía delta; exploration might uncover subsoil wealth as yet unguessed. Some day the Pacific Coast, in spite of—or because of—its climate, may no longer be wild and little-known country given over to a sparse African population.

There is a small, irrelevant footnote I cannot forebear to add, directed to whom it may concern: the hope that when the Colombians get around to promoting the coast, they will not disturb that tiny island off Tumaco where the great-grandson of a freed slave rules in frock-coated barefoot majesty, homemade decorations strewn across his chest, his dignity upheld by a scantily clad but well-disciplined bodyguard armed with wooden rifles. The sweep of Colombian progress can afford to spare this dark Pacific counterpart of the Irish Blasketts.

CHAPTER XX

For Christ and Don Sebastián

DON SEBASTIÁN DE BELALCÁZAR, discoverer of southern Colombia and the valley of the Cauca, sometime Governor of Popayán and the lands as far as the Sierra de Abibe, stands out boldly enough on the crowded canvas of the Conquest. The image has, however, something of the uncertain contours and more-than-human dimensions of romantic legend: valiant, dominating, leonine and not quite real.

Heroes look their best in the tempered light of curtailed knowledge; they should not be subjected to that blighting glare of information that ends in reducing the laurels to a few stalks of spinach. Don Sebastián is lucky, for the modern tendency to show the giants of history in their nightshirts with their feet in a mustard bath cannot touch him. More than two thirds of his life is a question mark; he is reckoned to have spent fifty-four years ranging the still unconquered countries of the New World, and the only period of relative clarity is the last two decades. The date of his birth is uncertain, that of his death open to question; the manner of his coming to America has not been proved, although Henao and Arrubla, following Arroyo, say he accompanied Columbus in his third voyage to Santo Domingo in 1498. The happy result of all this uncertainty is that learned lecturers today can extol the great Adelantado much as campaign speakers present the shining candidate: with indiscriminating enthusiasm and a certain emotion.

The name Belalcázar refers to the place of his birth in Estremadura, as one might say John of Salem, and his real name (though by what authority is doubtful) was Moyano. It is

probable that he had a strong admixture of Moorish blood, like so many of his companions, for the long centuries of Arab and Berber reign in Spain only came to a decisive end when he was a small boy, and Córdoba, a caliphate for three centuries, is very near his native village. At the time of his tardy glory he was described as swarthy and strongly built, with black hair and beard and arrogant almond-shaped black eyes. There is a portrait of him, how authentic I do not know, which shows a handsome, predatory fellow in plain armour, a man obviously of the type which the French define as "inconvenient."

Whatever occupied Belalcázar in the first quarter of the sixteenth century—expeditions with Balboa, Almagro, Pizarro and Dávila—in 1530 we find him comfortably installed as mayor of a village in Nicaragua, raising cattle and a family with a Mayan woman of León: a settled, middle-aged man who had reached snug harbor after a lifetime of soldiering, a candidate for oblivion like a thousand other paid adventurers. His crony, Almagro, to whose child he had stood godfather, called him out of this bucolic retirement to join Pizarro in his last great journey to the south, to the conquest of Perú. Three reckless gamblers on a heroic scale, they were all fiercely ambitious, completely illiterate and over fifty years of age.

The story of the establishment of Spanish rule in the New World is not only one of unbelievable daring, unforgivable cruelty and a kind of superhuman luck, but also one of constant rivalries, double-crossing and alternating fortunes. The qualities that made the soldiers of fortune of the Indies invaluable in terrible "journeys" and desperate risks were not those most favorable to the sober responsibilities of disinterested government. The conquerors were less fitted for success than for struggle. As a rule, captains raised to power did not long enjoy their position. Stories of abuse of authority and ill-treatment of the natives, diligently fostered by envious colleagues, filtered back to the Court in Spain; *oidores* or *visitadores*—special judges who were to all effects one-man Grand Juries—were sent to make short work of erring governors. Again and again the parabolic design was repeated, and Belalcázar could not escape the familiar pattern.

The first two years in Perú, however, were comparatively uneventful. Don Sebastián was not with Pizarro when, triumphant as a devouring wind, the Spaniards passed from Cajamarca to Cusco. He had been detailed to guard the seaport of San Miguel, and he found it flat, stale and distressingly unprofitable. When an alliance with one of the chieftains of the highlands presented an excuse for a campaign of his own, he gathered a force of two hundred foot soldiers and eighty horse (there had been an influx of stray adventurers from Panamá and Nicaragua, drawn by the smell of gold) and started for the Ecuadorian plateau. There Almagro caught up with him, and together they added a new province to the Crown.

Whether out of jealousy, mistrust or merely lack of interest, Pizarro did not reward Belalcázar as the tough old captain hoped. When it became painfully apparent that he was *not* going to be made governor of Quito, don Sebastián decided to stake his winnings on a venture to the north, beyond the Ancas Mayu to the fabulous land of El Dorado.

His share of the Inca loot would have made it possible to live in style as a country squire of means for the rest of his life, but after what he had seen in Perú—tons of gold, bushels of jewels—don Sebastián was in no mood for rural retreats like the farm in Nicaragua, or even for a subordinate position in the land he had helped to win and the city he had established. He wanted power for himself, and the riches that came with power. New worlds were not conquered merely to appease an inner hunger for the unknown, but as a business proposition: one fifth of the loot to the Crown, a percentage to every soldier, a part to each captain, and the lion's share to the chief, the caudillo. The trick was to find a remunerative country that had not already been staked out by someone else and "pacify" it on one's own hook. Belalcázar, though he prudently refrained from saying so, did not undertake his expedition for the greater glory of Francisco Pizarro.

In 1535 Belalcázar sent out an advance exploring party under two of his most capable captains, Juan de Ampudia and Pedro de Añasco. There was no nonsense about converting the heathen on this trip, and leaving a trail of burned villages, slaughtered Indians and smoldering hate, they passed through the mountains

into the smiling valley of the Cauca. There don Sebastián joined them, and in July 1536 he founded "Santiago de Caly in the land of the Gorriones." Next year Miguel Muñoz, his dark-browed cousin from Córdoba, moved the city by his orders to its present site.

Belalcázar did not linger in Cali. The Cauca Indians, the Paeces, traded regularly with the Chibchas, and from them he must have had fairly exact information as to the whereabouts of Cundinamarca, the home of the Gilded Man. Don Sebastián planned to march over the páramos to the headwaters of the Magdalena and then follow the course of the river northward, but first he needed more troops and supplies, and the only place to find them was Perú. He started back to Quito, and at the end of 1536 came into the enchanting Vale of Pubén, "having suffered so much hardship, and difficulty of mountains, and so much hunger . . . that he decided to rest there." Ideas of repose are relative; the months were spent in Indian fighting, arduous exploration, and the establishment of Popayán on the green *lomas* of the western foothills.

Just how Belalcázar spent his time between the spring of 1537, when he left Popayán, and May 1538, when he again marched into the Pubén, has been told in various and conflicting accounts. Some historians hold that he went all the way to Lima to see Pizarro and enlist his help; others say he never got beyond Quito, where he dragooned the Cabildo into giving him the necessary soldiers and supplies, largely on the basis of a letter from the Queen complimenting him and urging him to fresh efforts.

It is almost harder to believe that Belalcázar had managed to have a thorough report of his discoveries drawn up, send it over his mark to Spain and receive a reply from the Empress Isabella, all before his return to Quito, than it is to believe in the 5,000-mile trip to the City of the Kings. Main-route travel was probably easier in Perú at that time than almost anywhere in the world, for at the Ancas Mayu, the frontier between Quito and Popayán, the Inca roads began. These "admirable highways," graded, shored and "so well paved they seemed of Roman construction," were marvels of organization. "The Cawsey five and twenty Foot broad," says a long-ago English

writer, "and every four Leagues hath a stately House, where was provision of Vituals, and Apparel, and every half League, men that stood ready to carry Messages and Orders from Hand to Hand." Belalcázar would have taken the low road, "the Way thorow the Plains along the Coast, of twenty five Foot broad, and on each side a Wall of a Man's height, from Puira to Chile . . . between trees that yielded a very pleasant Shadow."

It has been suggested that Pizarro's aid was obtained by a present of gold, but this seems hardly necessary. The fight between Almagro and Pizarro was on, and Belalcázar was much more bound to the former than the latter; don Francisco was no doubt more than ready to further any enterprise that would take Almagro's formidable *compadre* several thousand miles away.

In any case, May 1538 saw don Sebastián back in Popayán with a well-found body of troops, a thousand Indian porters, an assortment of domestic animals and seed for the settlement, and an imposing herd of pigs to feed his future expedition. (Conquistadores with an allergy to pork were apparently candidates for starvation, and anyone who has tried to drive just one pig in any desired direction will realize anew the ability and patience of the Spanish adventurers.) Two months later the long line of horsemen, infantry and slaves started over the Central Cordillera; early in 1539 they pitched camp beside the Magdalena between Honda and Girardot. Raising their eyes, the men of Perú could see the slopes of the Promised Land, hanging far above them where the Eastern Andes cut the sky at the height of the mid-morning sun. It speaks well for them, and Spanish discipline, that they behaved so decently when they found that they had been beaten to the goal by an expedition of which they had never heard.

By this time Francisco Pizarro, now generally known as the Marquis, had realized that Belalcázar was slipping through his fingers and taking a distressingly large amount of territory with him. Accordingly, he sent Lorenzo de Aldana, an estimable and unspectacular trouble-shooter, to arrest the too-enterprising subordinate and take over the administration of the regions already explored. Don Sebastián, however, was already making tracks for Spain, leaving his settlements in the Cauca to get

along as best they might—which was badly enough in all conscience. In Cali there was sickness and want, and the natives were increasingly hostile; in Popayán, “The Indians died with incredible rapidity,” say Henao and Arrubla, “they ate grasses and insects, and hunted each other like beasts for food. . . . Such causes annihilated the population of the valley of Pubén.”

When Andagoya arrived from Spain, he was shocked at the evidences of unreasoning cruelty on the part of the conquerors, though his righteous indignation, a shade on the smug side, is not without *arrière pensées*. “It used to be a very well-peopled land and very fertile . . .” he wrote, “but when I arrived there I found it so depopulated that . . . where there had been a hundred thousand houses one could not find ten thousand men by searching. And the principal cause of its destruction was that as they had been so ill-treated without respect of truth or peace, so did they go away. And inasmuch as in Popayán the Christians sowed nothing in all the time they had been there, the Indians having their corn to harvest, the Christians went and gathered it and took it, and turned the pigs and horses into it, decided not to plant: and as their maize takes eight months to mature, there was such great famine that many of them ate each other, and others died of hunger.”

The first Indians baptized in Popayán were of an inquiring mind, though willing to be convinced. “Why has nothing been said to us before of this?” they asked, remembering the doubtful mercies of the invaders. “Why should it seem a good thing? And why, if you say you come to bring life and salvation, have you murdered us with so much cruelty?” The converts added that the Indians often discussed among themselves what sort of people these could be who behaved so ill, and who killed those who might serve them; why did the Spaniards not think of that? Also, more precisely, to a captain—if you preach the seventh commandment, how does it happen that you have three wives? Regrettably, Andagoya does not say how these embarrassing questions were answered.

“This land of Popayán, as I have said, is very beautiful and fertile: the foods of these provinces are: maize and a root which they call *papas* (potatoes) which are like chestnuts as big as a large nut, and other roots which taste like turnips, and many

fruits which they have." From the hard, small-eared corn "they make a very good bread, and wine and honey, and oil and vinegar."

When Sebastián de Belalcázar came again to Cali and Popayán, it was in full panoply of authority. By letters patent of Charles V he was Adelantado for life of all the territory from Quito north to the Sierra de Abibe—a larger and richer province than Cundinamarca itself. With him he brought missionaries, better fitted than fighting men to cope with the awkward logic of the natives; artisans with their families; seed, stock and implements; men-at-arms, pages and furnishings. It was just ten years since he had left the farm in León.

The harassed and masterless Cauca had accepted Pascual de Andagoya, whose grant only included the west coast, as governor de facto; Pizarro, his hands full with rebellious factions, did not try to dislodge him. But Andagoya was no match for Belalcázar, even if he had wished to defy the Royal warrant—a thing very few Spaniards, however reckless and unprincipled, would have dreamed of doing. Rescued from prison in Popayán by a Crown inspector who was providentially "passing through" in the casual manner of the fantastic times, he was able to return to Spain. Don Sebastián remained supreme.

Supreme, but not at rest. The last ten years of the Conqueror's life had nothing of the gentle decline, the mellow indolence of age. They could more accurately be described as hell on horseback. He fought the Indians, he fought Gonzalo Pizarro, he fought rivals who threatened his supremacy. Twice he went with an expedition to support the King's forces in Ecuador and Perú. He sent out missions, bellicose or merely acquisitive, in all directions. In 1546 the curtain rose on the last act.

Don Jorge Robledo, Lieutenant-General and Captain-General by commission from Aldana, founder of Cartago, Anserma and Antioquia, most gallant of Conquistadores, had come to the Cauca with Belalcázar after taking part in the march on Cajamarca and the campaign of Quito. Unlike the Adelantado, he was of gentle birth and humane disposition; like him, he was ambitious. Just as Belalcázar had invested his own gold in perilous enterprises under the authority of a distant chief, so Robledo had carried out the exploration and settlement

in what are now Caldas and Antioquia "spending of his own"; as Belalcázar had slipped off without leave for Spain, so did Robledo, and with the same intent. This form of flattery may be sincere, but it can also be peculiarly exasperating; the old lion in Popayán snarled with rage.

In 1546 don Jorge returned. In four years he had made the amazing journey from Antioquia through the Chocó to Urabá; been captured, despoiled and sent a prisoner to Spain by Heredia, governor of Cartagena; vindicated himself brilliantly, been granted the title of Marshal, and married the noble Doña María de Carvajal. He came to Cartagena in the suite of Díaz de Armendáriz (the unpopular bearer of the New Laws) and as his lieutenant, was sent to require submission of Belalcázar.

Armendáriz must have been very naïve to imagine that the fiery old autocrat of the Cauca could be tamed so easily, particularly by the detested Robledo. On October fourth, 1546, Belalcázar surprised Robledo by night at Loma de Pozo, and the next day executed him together with three of his officers. The cannibals of the valley feasted on the still-warm bodies.

This is Scene I. Scene II only begins in 1550, and meanwhile the Adelantado had had time to order more expeditions, punitive or exploratory; to march once more against Gonzalo Pizarro, this time all the way to Cusco, 3,500 miles and back again; and to find the silver mines of Cambis.

Don Sebastián had been stronger than the general of Atahualpa. He had been stronger than the Paeces, stronger than the mountains and the selva, than disease and hunger. He had vanquished his rivals, and defied Pizarro himself. He had even conquered Time. What defeated him was a woman.

Doña María de Carvajal de Robledo was a delicately nurtured young lady with the same implacable character as that other vengeful woman, the Gaitana. It was the Gaitana who raised the tribes of Timaná against the Spaniards, destroying the whole garrison, after her son, the Chief, had been burned alive by order of Pedro de Añasco. It was the Gaitana who—not content with leading the captured Añasco, a tortured wreck with empty eye-sockets, by a halter until he died—incited all the tribes of the upper Magdalena to unite in war against the whites. The patrician girl of Spain and the old cannibal of the

Andes were hag-ridden by a common obsession, and it was Jorge Robledo's widow who pursued Belalcázar relentlessly until he was brought to trial for murder and condemned to death.

The Adelantado was summoned to trial in 1550. Under sentence of execution, he appealed to the Council of the Indies, and early in 1551 started under bond for Spain. He got only as far as Cartagena; there he died of fever, deserted, broken and nearly seventy-five years old. Mario Carvajal, passionate apologist, says that one of the only two friends left to him bought four yards of muslin and paid a nameless woman a peso and two reales to make a shroud. The date of his death is given as April 30, 1551, and even here there is a question, for in 1551-52, he appears to have formed a co-operative society in Anserma, the articles of which, signed with his mark, are in the archives of Cali. No one who loved him in life or admired him in history ever looked for his grave; no one knows the spot where he was buried. If it is ever discovered, they might put on it a phrase of López de Mesa's: "He came in pursuit of the fabulous Dorado, and found immortality."

CHAPTER XXI

All the World Is Popayán

Lovely and still, she sits apart,
Remembering the splendid years—
The strife, the triumph and the tears,
Laughter that spoke the carefree heart,
Bright clash of armor, greed and loss
And harsh redemption of the Cross.

White walls and secret garden-squares,
Warm roofs by singing belfry towers,
Crimson and purple pride of flowers;
Above them Belalcázar stares
Beyond the town that calls him lord
To worlds unknown that wait his sword. . . .

TWO HUNDRED YEARS AGO Popayán was larger, more cultivated and more worldly than New York, as noble and exclusive a city as any in the New World. Marking it large on the maps of the time with a drawing of turreted castles to show its importance, geographers described it as a "great, proud and rich Town." If the figures are right, there are five thousand less people in Popayán today than there were in 1750; it is only the capital of the department of Cauca now, but then it was the capital of a gobernación more than half as large as Spain itself.

Cali is vital, energetic, open; Popayán is classical, patrician and a little weary. She is like a great lady, no longer young but still beautiful, who remembers in tranquillity the passion and pride, the imperious grace and careless generosity of youth. For Popayán has had a turbulent history, and her sons were an

unquiet, seeking brood, avid for knowledge and experience, who went out from the thick-walled, rambling houses to make names for themselves in Santa Fe and in Europe. Now, she is content to rest. Popayán does not burn with the fever of progress that hurries twentieth century pulses to a synchronized beat; she does not really care about catching up with an industrialized world, because in her heart of hearts she believes the half-mocking proverb: "Todo el mundo es Popayán"—All the world is Popayán.

The road from Cali to Popayán (which is the road to Quito) is good, but one sees more from the train. Big open windows give a perfect view, the seats are comfortable and every twenty minutes or so a boy passes through and dusts the thick deposit of cinders off everything but the passengers. Ardent Caucanos endure the cinders, if not without batting an eye, with uncritical satisfaction; the smuts come from Cauca coal, and the thought that the effete authorities in Bogotá threaten to switch to oil fuel, and thus injure local industry in the trivial interests of superficial cleanliness, makes them see red.

The Valley is always a study in green: yellow-green of cane fields, pale fluff of bamboos, ragged green of plantains, the darker spread of cacao plantations, the smooth singing green of pastures. Mountains close the vista, patched with ultramarine shadows and the moving negatives of woolly clouds, and the whole scene, framed in the window like a watercolor, can only be described as lush. At the frequent stations women and children gaze up hopefully, offering bread and fruit and fried chicken for sale; pack animals stand for loading, their heads draped with their owners' ruanas, like photographers who might at any moment duck from under the cloth to say winningly, "and *now*—what about one in profile?" Behind the stations filled with dark people in light clothes—vendors, beggars, and bystanders down for the fun—there are grassy spaces with trees, where a few saddled horses wait patiently with their heads together; wide, overgrown streets run between low adobe houses to lose themselves in the fields.

After an hour or so the valley narrows, and the road begins to climb in dizzy loops. The curves are narrow and so is the

track, and the train leans at violent angles around the bends; sometimes a car, levered by its fellows fore and aft, which the exigencies of the terrain have inclined in opposed directions, gives up the unequal struggle and jumps the rails. Truth compels me to say this only happened once when I was traveling—but then, I have only once gone by train to Popayán. On that occasion everything was handled admirably, and the passengers were entirely calm—either because their nerves were under perfect control or because they shared the point of view of the old lady in the seat behind me.

“Travel is always full of perils,” she said in a resigned voice, gesturing widely with a leg of chicken, “I just put myself in God’s hands before I start, and hope for the best.”

It is hard to see how Sebastián de Belalcázar and his men could ever bring themselves to go beyond the Vale of Pubén, for it is one of the most beautiful places in the whole world. No wonder the Indians fought to keep it “so that many admired that they proved so obstinate and difficult to be subdued.” The air is soft and clear washed, with the peculiar luminosity northern countries know fleetingly in Spring, and the sky has a Maytime depth of blue, against which the inevitable clouds lie in piles of mother-of-pearl. One is always conscious of the air and sky; there is so much of them, and the wide streets are so quiet. The typical sound of Popayán is the patter of small unshod hooves as the burros and mules pass along the asphalt. I hope the blare of the radio will never drown it, but the odds are against it; insistent rumbas, played fortissimo, may soon be the national sound of Colombia.

The best introduction to a visit to Popayán is to climb the knoll just outside the town to its narrow summit where Belalcázar rides in bronze. The statue is superb; it makes one think of Verrocchio’s Colleoni in Venice, valiant, ruthless and magnificent, but instead of rising against the background of a seventeenth century piazza, it stands on the prow of the hill, silhouetted against cloudy space, and looks out across the valley and the sweep of the Andes.

From the white stone base of the monument one can have a bird’s-eye view of Payanés history, from the Conquistador above to the swimming pool in the fold of the hill below, and

from the square church towers of the Colony to the modern brewery outside the town. High in the east are the plumed snows of the volcano Puracé, from which the River of Vinegar flows; somewhere must be "the mountain M," which Ulloa mentions—an intriguing name, like X₂₄ or K₂—although I could not identify it. On the other side is the little church of Belén, goal of the fantastic, gaudy procession of the Three Kings, which has been held every Epiphany for hundreds of years. The road to the north lies across the valley like a casual thread on a piece of green velvet.

Comparison is a pitfall into which it is easy to fall and drown miserably in a welter of similes, but the statement I saw somewhere to the effect that Popayán is to Colombia as Bruges is to Belgium, and I would add, Padova to Italy, is peculiarly apt. It does not, of course, faintly resemble either, but it stands for the same things; a little apart from the swifter currents of national life, it guards a tradition of learning, piety and provincial aristocracy. It is also, in the engaging phrase of a Colombian historian, the place where many great men's cradles have rocked.

Popayán has given seven presidents to the Republic, and in the Calle de los Proceres (Street of the Patriot Fathers), as the Calle 3 is called, nearly every house is custodian of the memory of some famous leader of the Liberation. One is the birthplace of Francisco José de Caldas, self-made scientist who lifted himself beyond his teachers and his texts to world recognition. He had to do it the hard way, building his own barometer and sextant; perhaps it was because of this poverty of equipment that he discovered how to measure altitude with no other instrument than a thermometer. Botanist, mathematician, engineer, astronomer and maker of ordnance, this quiet, swarthy Creole of the Andes was given over body and soul to research. His herbarium has long since disappeared, but the beautifully laid out Plaza is a memorial to him, and in it the Payanese, filled with a double pride in the savant and the *procer*, have set up a fine statue.

(Once the great have been frozen well above eye level in immobile bronze, they take on a quality of inhuman grandeur that makes it almost impossible to think they ever made a joke or possessed a family. It is somehow pleasant, looking at the

monument to Caldas, to recall that his sister, married to a Doctor Wallace, was referred to by her husband as "Old Busy Devil.")

Next to the house of Caldas is that of General Tomás Cipriano de Mosquera, thrice president of the Republic and once provisional president, a stormy, incalculable, domineering, gallant soldier who died at the age of eighty after a life of triumphs and reverses that included practically everything the Colombian scene had to offer. The Mosqueras are a recurrent motive in the nineteenth-century pattern; the amazing General is the most famous of them as well as the most biographically irresistible (he was a procer of the Independence; he gave the Republic a notably constructive administration and later did his best to upset the central government; he was the leader, alternately, of the national forces and those of bloody revolt; he was the brother of the Archbishop of Bogotá and a rabid anti-clerical; he was exiled for unconstitutional activities during his third regular term, and returned to be governor of Cauca). But there are others: Manuel José, the Archbishop, who died in Marseilles on his way to receive the cardinal's hat (and who was presented with his ring by clergy and Catholics in New York); Manuel María, Minister of Colombia to Paris, London, Berlin and Madrid; Joaquín, friend of Bolívar, President of Great Colombia and Vice-President of Colombia, savant and rector of the University, who died at the age of ninety-one. They are not newcomers to New Granada; don Francisco de Mosquera governed Popayán wisely and well in 1564.

The common people of Popayán, like those of Patía and Pasto, were consistently royalist until, and even after, they found themselves part of a republic. But the Colombian War of Independence was not a common people's revolution, and so many gently bred Payanese died for freedom that the correspondent of the National Academy of History has suggested with some reason that, "Since the list of sons of this city who have given their lives for the country is so long, it would be best to have one sole monument which would comprise all their names." One of them, however, stands out above all the others: Camilo Torres.

Torres, like Caldas, is a national figure, not a local glory.

Intellectual and jurist, companion of Nariño in the first seethings of rebellion, he organized (with another Payanés, Miguel de Pombo) the first junta of Santa Fe. As president of the United Provinces, he authorized Bolívar's march into Venezuela from Cúcuta, and his faith was still firm when the future Liberator returned after ephemeral victory and crushing defeat. "You have been an unlucky soldier," declared Torres, characteristically, "but you are a great man." (Years later, Bolívar gave part of his own salary to the Señora Prieto de Torres, widow of "the most honorable citizen of the old republic of New Granada.") Torres nearly escaped the terror of the Spanish reconquest; with other patriot leaders he arranged to be taken aboard the ship of the English pirate Brown. But when the fugitives reached Buenaventura, the corsair had sailed—which gives color to the tale that Brown was carrying the treasure of Lima, later buried on Cocos Island. Trying to make their way from the coast to the Amazon, the patriots were captured near Popayán, and so the story ends in 1816 with a firing squad and a gallows.

Conquistadores, proceres, and prelates—they are the history of Popayán. The bishopric dates from 1546, and a long succession of illustrious wearers of the purple made this remote stronghold of the Church a place of note when the dominion of Rome was an intangible universal empire and a potent political force. One of them, Liñán y Cisneros, ruled all New Granada by appointment from the Crown in 1671; another, Jiménez de Enciso, stout champion of monarchy, was won over to the independent cause by Bolívar, who in one personal interview accomplished more than had been obtained by years of pondered argument and urgent persuasion. Dominicans, Franciscans and Jesuits had houses in the city, whence the missionaries went out to establish seventy-two settlements in the jungles of the Oriente—now, alas, nearly all lost. It follows that Popayán is a city of churches—churches large and small, within whose heavy doors the half-light glows with gold and blue and scarlet of carved altars and reliquaries. The Fathers were patient in teaching their Indian converts to fashion intricate designs and lay gold leaf on color to last for centuries; these baroque frames and panels are another illustration of what Colombia

has lost—but might still regain—in the neglect of handicraft and peasant artistry.

The long-ago artisans managed more than wood. They worked in gold and precious stones and enamel to create the treasures that are kept in the sacristies of Popayán. Apart from the wealth of silver candelabra and vessels, of chalices and plaques, and the massy silver thrones on which sit the Son and Mother of God, there are jewels that seem legend made tangible. The monstrance of San Agustín, for instance, is solid gold encrusted with gems, the base supporting a two-headed eagle feathered with pearls and emeralds, surmounted by an emerald cross. And even this custodia is surpassed by that of San Francisco.

San Francisco is the church that houses the Voice of Popayán, the great bell whose tone is given by fifty pounds of gold cast with the bronze. When black storms roll down from the Cordillera to menace crops, the Voice has power to drive them away in harmless rain. In the sacristy of the Franciscan church there are cupboards that hold an emperor's ransom. The monstrance has pride of place—fifty pounds of intricately wrought gold and jewels. On a heavy base set with stones, an angel supports the "sun": a design of grapevines in pearls, diamonds, emeralds, amethysts and enamel, with jeweled rays each ending in an emerald, and a frame of twenty-four large square emeralds around the inner circle. The base is modern (Nariño took the original when he came through on his ill-omened campaign to Pasto), but the rest is the work of Indian craftsmen of the seventeenth century.

There is another monstrance, of gold and precious stones and platinum—a magnificent piece, but an anticlimax. The contents of a dingy wooden box, however, successfully hold their own: an imperial crown and aureole measuring more than a yard across, of burnished gold set with scrolls and arabesques of diamonds—uncounted myriads of diamonds. (Literally uncounted, for when I asked the Rector who was so kindly drawing out the pious riches, how many, he answered smilingly, "Really, I couldn't say. We have never checked them.")

To my mind, however, the most remarkable treasure of San Francisco is none of these, but something more exciting.

Around the whitewashed walls of the sacristy, high up near the roof, hangs a series of twenty small paintings. They are monochromes on glass—never a widely used medium—portrait heads of saints, and every one is perfection. I do not know what long-dead master brushed in those superb likenesses, though there is a similarity, strong yet to me elusive, to a manner and technique—Ribera?—well known. There is a sure, unlabored touch that lays bare the bones and muscles underneath the skin and the soul behind the physical structure that no also-ran of painting ever possessed, and only a superlative draftsman could manage a medium so unforgiving. The set was presented to the Bishop of Popayán by the Pope, about 1714; beyond that no one seems to have attempted to trace or identify the little masterpieces.

Popayán is the home of the poet Valencia—indeed, the two are practically synonymous. Don Guillermo Valencia, known and revered over all Colombia as El Maestro, is not one of the stark singers of conscious democracy. He belongs to another world: sensitive, fastidious and aristocratic. His poetry, cast in pure classic forms, has a kind of delicate opulence and a precise yet flowing grace. To Popayán, his adored Popayán, which is the heart and fiber of him, he has dedicated an ode that admirably illustrates his style and feeling. It begins:

*Ni mármoles épicos, claros de lumbre y coronas
ni muros invictos, que prósperos hierros defiendan,
y guardan leones de tranquila postura triunfal,
ni erectas pirámides—urnas al genio propicias—
magníficamente tu fama delatan, sonora
con voces eternas, fecunda ciudad maternal.*

Not monuments, epic in splendor of flames and of garlands,
Nor unconquered ramparts, by resolute sabers defended
And guarded by lions in tranquil and triumphant posture,
Nor towering pyramids—urns of the fostering Spirit—
Magnificent blazon your fame to the heavens, sonorous
With eternal voices, O city fecund and maternal.

The disheartening difficulty of getting Latin-language poetry into adequate English is equalled only by that of putting English lyrics into Spanish or Italian. This, however, is Valencia's

forte; he loves the challenge of translation. His version of the "Ode to a Grecian Urn" is magic, but probably the "Ballad of Reading Gaol" was a harder task. El Maestro told me he translated English, which he knows less well than French and Italian, with the aid of audacity and a dictionary; I may add that it is also by aid of a poetic talent as great as any the New World has produced.

The Valencia mansion, built round a vast patio paved with irregular slabs outlined in violets, tempts guests to strain the warmest welcome. If they can pass the colonial salons lined with portraits of ancestors—the one who came with Belalcázar from Spain, the one who was at Santa Fe with Quesada, the one who was head of the Casa de Moneda, the one who had eighteen children, the one who was killed fighting Nelson at Trafalgar, the one who was executed for the cause of liberty—they may easily lose themselves among the crowded stacks in the library. This is the downstairs library, strictly and solely books, which opens from a workroom whose table is at once the largest I have ever seen and the most gloriously untidy; there is another upstairs, which is a snooper's paradise. It was here that I saw the last letter Bolívar ever wrote. Historians hold that the Liberator was opposed to Urdaneta's assumption of power in 1830. But in this, written six days before his death, he urges General Briceño to forget his antagonism and work with Urdaneta, who was the country's hope of salvation. He ends: "It is only by making the sacrifice of suffocating personal feelings that our friends, and Colombia itself, can be saved from the horrors of anarchy." He knew when he wrote that his words were useless, and died in the bitterness of disillusion.

Proceres, poets, prelates—and also professors. Across the way from *the* hotel (hotels are not Popayán's forte) there is a Spanish church, solid and foursquare, with a portal cut in warm stone and an old *pila* in the flagged square before the door. The modest entrance in a side wall gives into the block of buildings that house the University of the Cauca. First established by Santander, it is the lineal descendant of the Dominican Seminary, which by 1560 was already teaching arts, theology and the humanities to young Popayán. The dizzy vicissitudes of Colombian education were faithfully reflected in the Cauca,

from the farseeing Ospina reforms of 1842 (which prescribed, among a surprising number of other things, nine hours of classes daily, beginning at 5 A.M.) to the disintegrating edicts of that remarkable President (José Hilario López) who held that academic degrees were undemocratic. The University, which has a fine library rich in incunabula, counts now about a thousand students, of whom probably 995 are men.

It is only five hours by train or automobile from Popayán to Cali—and only one day by airplane from Cali to Miami. I am torn between the desire that Popayán should be better known and the fear that it should be somehow altered and spoiled. One thing is certain—no written description can give any idea of the Vale of Pubén. I have tried to recapture in words the sweep of the fields and broken hills, the mountains standing dark against the sky, the shifting loveliness of clouds, the quality of the lucent air. It is no good. There is a beauty that catches at the heart, so that one cannot look at it without emotion, but it cannot be frozen into little symbols on a printed page. . . . As long as I live I shall remember one incandescent sunset, seen across the quiet fields of Belalcázar, but I know better than to try to describe it.

And Popayán itself, a little town in an out-of-the-way Andean valley, is not just a provincial backwater. The wide streets are only seemingly deserted. A silent crowd mills up and down between the severe colonial façades: Conquistadores in plumed helmets and bright cuirasses, with hard faces and reckless eyes; mitred bishops in procession; fine gentlemen in velvet coats and buckled shoes, one hand on the hilt of a jeweled sword; missionaries in from the Oriente, with tales of strange tribes far beyond the Cordillera; the worn and splendid bands of patriots, straggling in ragged indomitable columns; presidents and poets, Indians and slaves. No, Popayán is not empty. In fact, it is one of the most populous places I know.

CHAPTER XXII

The Loyal Subjects of His Catholic Majesty

WHEN YOU ARE IN PASTO you are almost on the Equator—a thing to remember as you draw your overcoat closer in the chill air. The town huddles together in the middle of a valley 7,500 feet high, and wraps up against an average temperature, month in and month out, of 55°; around it the peaks of the Pasto knot rise nearly three miles into the air. Galeras, the volcano that dominates the city, is calculated at over 15,000 feet, though no one has ever measured it exactly. The mountains are densely forested and unfriendly, but the valley is enough to make any farmer's mouth water. It is intensely cultivated, mostly in small holdings, and such bumper wheat, such glistening corn, such fat pasture and sleek cattle inspire even a city dweller with an urge to the pastoral life.

It is a ten-hour drive from Popayán to Pasto, and unless you are an incurable backseat driver—in which case you had better take a strong sedative before starting—the whole trip is a scenic joy. The road is quite good as such things go in the Andes, and most of its varied length is controlled by one-way chains, so that in dry weather even a nervous subject can enjoy the unending succession of rugged panoramas without too great strain. I would not advise more highstrung travelers to do it as I once did. On that occasion we left Pasto in driving rain an hour before the gray light of dawn's left hand. The car slithered and sashayed in the deep mud, billowed over potholes in a casually cleared landslide, skirted precipices with a coy sideways motion. As we skated around the narrow bends with

eternity at our elbow, the gentleman in the back seat identified each dizzy curve.

"*Here*," he would say with gloomy zest, "is the place So-and-So's car went over the cliff. Six dead." And a few minutes later, "That is the curve where the bus went over and killed twenty-seven passengers." For hours the journey was a succession of commemorations, with a fresh disaster every mile. Sometimes the victims were lost in bottomless abysses and sometimes they were burnt alive; the survivors were invariably maimed for life. We reached Popayán feeling we had been preserved by a miracle.

There are villages along the way, the largest being the unpleasant one of Patía. No amount of romantic history, no degree of breath-taking beauty in the surrounding mountains, can redeem this miserable agglomeration of houses. It is almost entirely inhabited by Negroes, degenerate descendants of one-time slaves, and the majority of them have skins patched with the pink and scaly blue of *carate*—a particularly unattractive disease that turns those of African blood into piebald horrors. Other hamlets ignored by the map straggle for a little alongside the highway and then drop behind. There is, alas, no trace of the village among the crags that Cieza described—the wealthy Pueblo del Sal, whose people were "nasty, but simple and free from malice." Nor can those who rush from chain to chain in automobiles hope to meet the most interesting dweller of the ravines: El Duende, the Elf, whose delight it is to ride by night. This tiny hobgoblin sits the horses' necks, his feet thrust into stirrups he has woven from the mane; and as he rides he roars with glee. Tschiffley, who passed this way on his fabulous ride, gives the story, which was told him when he found his animals one morning with their manes knotted in intricately plaited elf-locks. The one town is La Unión, rich and squalid, a center for some of the best "Panama" hats known to commerce. It consists of a single street precariously balanced for a mile or so on the knife-edge of a ridge; as the car jolts over the cobbles, one can look through each of the houses standing in single file on either side to a view of infinity, framed a little askew in an open door.

Between La Unión and Pasto is Berruecos, insignificant in itself, but tragically famous to Colombians. Here Bolívar signed

a short-lived peace with the irrepressible royalists of Pasto in 1822, and in these mountains armies and expeditions marched and fought for centuries. But the reason Berruecos is remembered lies in a small stone shaft standing inconspicuously just above the new road. It marks the spot where Antonio José de Sucre, Bolívar's beloved disciple, Grand Marshal of Ayacucho and one-time Dictator of Bolivia, was murdered as he rode to meet his family in Quito. He had survived innumerable battles, fought for independence in Venezuela, Colombia, Perú and Bolivia, conquered whole countries in the name of the Liberator, and had come out unscathed to be killed by a stray bandit in time of peace.

Bolívar dazzles and Santander commands respect, but Sucre must be loved. That strong and gentle character, unfailing in loyalty and generosity, reaches out across a century and takes hold of one's heart. In all his life there was nothing that was less than crystal clear, and neither political adversaries nor debunking historians have ever unearthed a mean or unworthy act. I am glad there is no pompous monument at Berruecos, but I would like to see, somewhere, a tablet to his memory, and on it the lines of Chaucer:

A Knight ther was, and that a worthy man
That fro the tyme that he first bigan
To ryden out, he loved chivalrye,
Trouthe and honour, fredom and curteisye.
Ful worthy was he in his lordes werre,
And therto hadde he ridden (no man ferre)
As wel in Cristendom as hethenesse,
And ever honoured for his worthinesse. . . .

And though that he were worthy, he was wys,
And of his port as meke as is a mayde.
He never yet no vileinye ne sayde
In al his lyf, un-to no maner wight.
He was a verray parfit gentil knight.

All during the Revolution and even after, Pasto was a thorn in the flesh of the patriots, who were in the position of zealous missionaries grimly determined to save the reluctant heathen in spite of themselves. The Pastusos were not only untouched

by the fever for independence: they were furiously opposed to it. Royalists to the marrow, they resisted liberation to the last gasp and beyond, for when the cause of Spain seemed lost, they starved themselves to death rather than accept another rule. Even today, they say, in country places men drink to His Catholic Majesty of Spain, heedless of the disconcerting realities of history. During the course of the Revolution, Pasto was taken and retaken by contending forces at least fifteen times, and when obliged to bow to the hated saviors, the people merely bided their time to rise again for King and Church.

Pasto has its royalist Nathan Hale. Agustín Agualongo was an Indian who became one of the most astute and effective caudillos of a period remarkably prolific in such chiefs. After succeeding in taking Pasto twice, he decided on an expedition to Barbacoas, the unattractive center of one of the richest gold regions in Colombia. From Popayán young Tomás de Mosquera went down, unguessed by the Pastuso troops, to lay a trap. Agualongo was captured and brought a prisoner to Popayán. As he was marched through the streets everyone crowded to see this legendary paladin of Spain, who was physically anything but a figure of romance.

"Why, he is just a little man!" exclaimed one of the craning housewives, loud enough to be heard. The Indian turned.

"My body is little," he said superbly, "but I have a mighty spirit."

Agualongo was executed in the square of Popayán by the unforgiving champions of freedom. The unkempt, ugly peasant stood small and undefeated before the firing squad, his slanting eyes fixed with contempt on the leveled muskets. Just before the volley he spoke, and this is what he said: "I am sorry I have not twenty lives to give for my religion and my king."

There is nothing impressive in the crowded city that was old when England was treating with the Indians in New York. There are a few fine buildings, a hospital that enjoys a wide reputation, a big new normal school (very modern buildings in a parklike enclosure), but the general effect is of small houses elbowing one another, drawing together for comfort from the stern majesty of the surrounding mountains. The hotel is not one of the "first class hotels which may be compared with the

best in Europe and the United States" of which the *Colombian Hand-Book* boasts. It can be compared, but not in terms the *Hand-Book* would approve. This little work, by the way, though not always to be taken to the letter, has a remarkably good collection of illustrations. Its aim is expressed in an elusively suggestive phrase by the editors. "In the present hand-book," they say in English, "we have wished to recopilate the most attractive and interesting features that are peculiar to Colombia."

The Hotel Niza is assembled from several old houses, and the result is a maze of intercommunicating courtyards on slightly different levels. There are two showerbaths and their accompanying "services" as they are known here—matters of some pride to the staff, if of dismay to the unaccustomed guest. My room had good, clean sheets, a most unusual abundance of furniture, insufficiently screened glass sides, and a double door that left a crack by which passers-by commanded an excellent view of the bed. I am sure no one would have looked in, however; there is an admirable unself-consciousness in Pasto that should preclude peeping. The passing waiter, busy cleaning his teeth, beams and murmurs courteous phrases through the foam. The menservants direct you with nods and becks and wreathèd smiles to the "service," and clucking sympathetically when it proves occupied, make your problem theirs in tones perfectly audible to the farthest patio. The guest one meets on the veranda, whistling gaily as he passes from room to room clad in underdrawers and a gray felt hat, merely steps aside politely with a slight bend from the waist. This unconcern about things the Anglo-Saxon muffles in embarrassed reticence is both charming and practical, for it is almost impossible to be reserved about hygienic matters in the less evolved parts of Colombia. Incidentally, some of the more luxurious hotels might take a leaf from the Niza in the matter of obliging service.

Pasto stands at a crossroads—west the road leads to Tumaco and Barbacoas, east to the Caquetá, the Putumayo and the far-off Amazon; south it goes to the Ecuadorian highlands and Quito, and north to Popayán, Cali and all Colombia. The province, named after the Precursor Nariño, is the southernmost tip of civilized Colombia. The frontier with Ecuador is

the same as that which marked the farthest borders of the Inca realm: the Ancas Mayu, or Blue River, where the first rest house stood and the extraordinary highways Pizarro and Belalcázar found began. Here there is a natural bridge across a chasm of white rock, and the near-by falls are two hundred and fifty feet high, but what attracts visitors is the miraculous Stone Virgin, who is worshiped by pilgrims from as far away as Perú. You can drive from Pasto to the Ecuadorian capital in a day now, through the rich valley of Túquerres and on by Otavalo.

Communications with the Pacific are by road across the ranges to the head of one of those fragmentary railroads, which in this case runs sixty-eight miles from the port of Tumaco to meet the highway. The road continues to reach Barbacoas, a depressing town strung along a bluff above an affluent of the Río Patía. In the mountains between Barbacoas and Pasto, and in the "many golden sanded rivers" that flow from them, there are numerous mines, Colombian, North American, Swedish, French, Belgian and British. The gold is sent to Pasto, usually in 600 per cent or 700 per cent bars, to the Bank of the Republic, and then to Medellín. As elsewhere, foreign miners receive in theory 40 per cent of the value in foreign currency, though practice modifies this according to the wherewithal in dollars on hand at the Bank.

Many people who have reason to know believe that Nariño holds enormous riches as yet undiscovered, in regions where exploration is even more arduous than in those already partially exploited. A mining expert of long experience told me that in his opinion the department was potentially the richest in the country, but that it was not suited to big-scale enterprises.

"There's plenty of stuff here for the company that keeps expenses down and knows what it's all about," he continued. "The trouble is that every time some foreign outfit gets some good reports and samples, it starts in hell-bent for millions. They say that U.S. companies have dropped \$5,000,000 in Nariño in the last two years, and they're far from being the only ones. This mania for bigness—anyhow, bigness by local standards—mixed with inexperience has made a lot of aching pocketbooks."

One of the most illuminating books for the foreigner who looks on the lands below the Isthmus as easy money is Forster's *Adventures of a Tropical Tramp*. He is writing about Perú, but what he says applies to most South American countries. The conclusion is that to succeed in a big way requires either a large initial capital or unusual personal equipment. The difficulties are so great—primitive or nonexistent transportation facilities, lack of skilled labor, no local supplies, and so forth—that often the first outlay and subsequent maintenance is beyond the reach of any but the most powerful organizations. And the requirements in the way of individual character are even greater.

"A lot of people seem to think that this is the promised land for men who can't make the grade at home," my friend remarked. "As a matter of fact, it takes more physical and moral stamina, and better technical preparation to succeed here than in other places, and on top of that you need to speak the language and know the country if you're going to do anything on your own."

However, if you are strong, reasonably skilled and have a reputation for fair dealing, and if you do not mind living two or three days from the nearest town, perhaps at an altitude that makes it almost impossible to cook anything without a pressure cooker; if you can handle unfamiliar labor and work in water up to your waist and sleep anywhere and ride a floundering mule all day up and down trails belly-deep in mud, if you can dodge amoebas and smother malaria—then you can do very well as a miner in Nariño.

In spite of the gold, until a few years ago Pasto insisted on a silver currency basis all its own. It coined no money, but used anyone else's with eclectic impartiality. Like the Chocó, it wanted silver coins, the bigger the better, and it did not matter whether they were Chinese or Maria Theresa talers, as long as they weighed enough. Even after 1920, it was a problem for employers in Tumaco to find enough silver currency to pay off their workmen.

The laborers of Nariño are not a bad lot. They look after their land extremely well, and in the mines give very fair results. It was a little difficult to persuade them to accept an

eight-hour day. On the twelve-hour day they were contented and well behaved; they earned more and had less time to get into mischief. The new laws seemed to them an unwarranted curtailment of their right to work as long as they pleased, and they occasionally went on strike for longer hours; the workings had to be searched at closing time to chase them out. Managers are somewhat put to it to find innocuous pastimes to occupy the idle hands of miners isolated in the mountains, often far from homes, families and the usual diversions of the village. They cannot have genteel competitive gardening, for either nothing will grow because of the altitude or everything grows without need of encouragement because of the damp heat—according to the location of the mine. A good book is no use except to prop up a short table leg or as a missile, for the peons are largely illiterate. And even the age-old game of *turmequé*, which was played by the Indians in pre-Conquest times, and which consists of throwing a small stone disk at a target on the ground (a petard is set off if the player scores a bull's-eye), palls if it is the only resource for long hours every day in the week.

For centuries Pasto has been famous for its lacquer bowls—an esoteric kind of fame, but real. These bore designs in rustic floral patterns, in red and blue and green and gold; the lac was made by masticating the gum of the mopa-mopa bushes and applying the result with a brush, and it was almost indestructible. Unfortunately, the art is dying; all one can find now are horrible little objects that look like cheap Japanese stuff, with niggling, garish patterns that are positively offensive. The shallow heavy wooden bowls have vanished. It is hard to forgive the neglect of handicrafts in Colombia, which not only fails to develop new forms of rustic art, but stifles the few authentic ones that still exist. I only hope that before the craftsmen who know the old styles have disappeared, something will be done to rescue the *barniz de Pasto*.

CHAPTER XXIII

Over the Hills and Far Away

THE ROAD FROM PASTO to the east is only forty-five miles long, but what it lacks in extent it makes up in type. I have seen some very sketchy mountain roads in various parts of the world, but I give the palm, with bows, to that from Pasto to San Francisco. Beside it the famous way to Villavicencio is child's-play and the Fusagasugá chain a thing to drive with one hand in a sling. After making the trip you are either a candidate for the asylum or you are cured of automobile jitters for life; for after you have sat behind a chauffeur whose happy, carefree nature is mirrored in his driving for the three and a half hours it takes to corkscrew over two passes that Providence never intended to hold a highway, you will never be quite the same.

Missing oblivion by inches all the way, you surmount the first range and drop into the beautiful valley of La Cocha. There is a lake here seventeen miles long; it is evident that it once covered the whole valley. The flat land between the mountains and the water is marshy and uncultivated, but I have heard that a couple of well-aimed cases of dynamite would clean out the stopped-up egress of the lake and turn thousands of useless acres into the richest farm land imaginable. From here you start the climb to the second páramo, to which—though you could not have guessed it—you have been working up gradually, and finally, God willing, you reach the lovely vale of Sibundoy. This pass has the thickest growth of *frailejones* I have ever seen—the odd, silvery plant that only grows in spots so high that other vegetation fails. Its leaves are soft and furry like velvet; they make a marvellous bed, for their camphorous

smell keeps insects away, and they have a grateful woolly warmth.

The fruitful land of Sibundoy was milk and honey to what was left of the unhappy expedition of Quesada's brother Hernán, when it dragged itself over the mountains in 1541. Hernán Pérez had started in search of the Dorado—by now firmly established in Spanish minds as a golden city somewhere over the horizon—and had marched through the western llanos, across the headwaters of the Caquetá, to the mountains that guard the Putumayo. Between this point and the valley, the expedition was reduced by "more than one hundred Spaniards, and more than eight thousand Indian men and women, and the most of the horses, who all died of hunger and drowning in the rivers and of sicknesses caused by the evil climate." The last camp before reaching haven had been marked by the regrettable loss of eight more soldiers, quartered for a feast by local cannibals before the eyes, but beyond the reach, of their companions, while one Francisco García, "who must have been rather a glutton," hanged himself from hunger. Thus the sadly depleted band reached Sibundoy, and "coming to some Indian cabins filled with maize and other edible roots and vegetables, they lodged there, and so great was their hunger that Spaniards, Indians and horses the whole night long thought only of eating, for they could not get their fill because of the dog-hunger they had."

These first valleys of the Putumayo are green heavens, if rather damp ones. It rains, on an average, more than 280 inches a year, which is wet any way you look at it. By our standards it would seem that the skies must drip continuously, but tropic rain can accomplish a remarkable amount in a short time (it once rained 15½ inches in one night at Buenaventura, and only part of a night at that), and there is plenty of sun between showers. Three rivers rise in the mountains to flow through the Sibundoy valley, one of them the Putumayo itself, which for much of its 1,660 kilometer length forms the boundary with Ecuador and Perú—and between the rivers and the rain-fall there is not a square inch that is not almost aggressively green. It is not, however, oppressively hot, and it is supposed to be free of both malaria and ticks.

This last does not sound very important, but it is of paramount interest in Colombia. The *garapatas*, as they are called there, are the cattleman's biggest headache, a persistent and widespread pest that is bad for man and beast, but particularly beast. It takes three months' treatment in the clinic of Bogotá to immunize an imported animal against tick fever, and unless those at grass are watched and frequently dipped, the swarms of horrible parasites will literally bleed them dry.

Men and cattle are sturdy and healthy looking in Sibundoy. Part of this may be due to the highly developed pharmacopoeia of the Indians who form the greater part of the population, and who have a specific of their own for most of the ills that flesh is heir to. From the trees and creepers, the roots and herbs of their forests they make medicines that have been used beyond the memory of man. Purges and emetics, specifics for malaria and parasites, a permanent depilatory, a reputedly harmless oral abortive, unguents that work like citronella and applications that heal wounds cleanly, stimulants and sedatives and disinfectants—they have them all.

To me the two most interesting items in this impressive collection are a local anesthetic *applied externally*, and the plant called *jajé*. The first is made from a root, and the resultant tincture is painted on the affected part, apparently with almost immediate effect. I know foreigners whose business takes them into these remote mountains who have used this preparation for years. They swear by its efficacy, and men who live as they do are not easily fooled. They say that a sliver of the root, chewed, will make that part of the mouth almost as insensible as a shot of novocaine. The Indian women paint themselves with the extract before childbirth and claim that it quiets the pain.

Jajé is common all down the Putumayo and along the Upper Orinoco and the northwest Amazon—common, that is, in Indian custom, for it has been little studied by science. Its usefulness to medicine is doubtful, but its interest is extreme. This is the dream-liana, the plant that makes men clairvoyant. The vines that in the Amazonian regions are called variously *yajé*, *ayahuasca* or *caapi* are variations on the same theme. There is nothing particularly pleasant in the effect of a draught

of nauseous, dark-colored liquid made from the woody jajé stems, but generations of Indians have used it to break the walls of time and space in an hour's sleep. Few outsiders have been allowed to try the drug, and those who have are in disagreement as to the results, though I know of two cases in which skeptical foreigners took it and found that it lived up nobly to its reputation. Barrigo Villalba, of the University of Bogotá, assisted by Dr Escobar, of Cali, isolated the alkaloids in 1925 and christened them Yagenina and Yageyna. The sample I have seems very innocent, rather like a piece of wisteria from the front porch.

These native remedies and, by extension, useful preparations for the well-furnished Putumayan home are endlessly interesting, and before dismissing them with a pitying smile, we might remember that these people used rubber, quinine, ipecac, balsam and other of our much appreciated raw medicinal materials long before we knew that they existed, and that endocrinology is just a dressed-up descendant of the medicine man's prescription of the sexual glands of animals, without the incantations.

The Putumayan tribes are not all of the same racial stem; even in the narrow limits of the Sibundoy valley, some speak a form of Quechua, the language of Perú, whereas Indians of the next village have an entirely different tongue. When it is considered that philologists have catalogued twenty distinct languages and one hundred and five dialects in Colombia, this is not surprising. It does, however, raise that problem which has always bothered me: how do explorers who penetrate the savage hinterlands for the first time carry on those animated conversations they report later? They are constantly telling us how they came upon a tribal house where no stranger had ever appeared before, and in conversation with the aged headman found out the details of customs, religion and the status of women, over a gourd of maize beer. How? If the Río Caiary, of which you have never heard and which does not even rate a place on the map, boasts five and maybe six distinct dialects, the Caquetá and Negro can make a much better showing.

The Sibundoyes are rather sophisticated as to clothes, though I do not know the origin of their costume or when they evolved

it. In 1733 Padre Gumilla wrote that the missionaries had found the tribes dressed only in a layer of ointment, occasionally overlaid with tasteful designs in color, and that when something more opaque in the way of covering was suggested, the Indians backed off bashfully and said, "Durruba ojaduca"—"It would make us ashamed." The aborigines had their *pudeur*, however, and would never have dreamed of appearing unlubricated. When the good Father missed some of his congregation at Mass and sent for them, the messenger returned and said:

"Padre, they cannot come because they are naked."

"What," said the priest, "are not all these naked too?"

"*Pero*," replied the Indian, "these are anointed."

Sibundoyes men wear a black smock, belted and reaching just above the knees. Over this goes a very large ruana, woven in stripes. The colors are subdued but effective: pale blue and dull red on black, yellow and dark brown on white. Around their necks are strings upon strings of white beads, making a weighty collar the thickness of a man's arm; sometimes there are two collars, one pale blue and one white. Medicine men vary this with a necklace of tiger teeth. The women wear thin woolen shawls of deep blue or brilliant scarlet, and short black skirts that show off their shapely legs in a curiously familiar way. (Sibundoyes legs are remarkably well made, by the way.) The men carry their broad machetes not in a sheath or by the handle, but by the naked blade.

There is a mission of Spanish Capuchins at Santiago and a larger one at Sibundoy, which have done extremely fine work. The Fathers, who have charge of education in all the Putumayo, Caquetá and Amazonas (schools in the "uncivilized" parts of Colombia are entrusted to the missions) find these Indians of the Upper Putumayo apt pupils, particularly in reading and arithmetic. Since the supply of reading matter is pretty much limited to copies of codes and regulations, each Sibundoyes is a finished lawyer, and disputes are endless. It is the headman's place to measure each man's plot in the communistic distribution of tribal land, but there is always room for a complaint, conducted with infuriatingly meticulous arguments.

The Indians of the valley have another trick that, although

not unique, must take a little doing. They foretell to the minute the time of death. When they come to the mission and say, "Father, you will be needed at such a place tomorrow at three," the good Father does not argue. He goes at three, for before four the patient will be dead.

The Capuchins, who have under their care the missions and schools of the Goajira and the Providencia islands as well as the huge extent of the Oriente, have done a great deal to counteract the memory of the horrible days when the lower Putumayo and Caquetá were a kind of no-man's land, disputed by four countries and terrorized by one group of lawless exploiters. The Peruvian rubber operators, far from the possibility of control by their own government, enslaved what Indians they could and killed off the others, often hunting them for fun, like game. The Conquistadores at their worst were a Sunday school by comparison. When Colombia made formal request to the British government that Sir Roger Casement, under sentence for Irish sedition during the last war, should be spared execution, it was a not wholly disingenuous tribute to the exposé he had made of the horrors of what came to be called "the Putumayo Rubber Scandal."

Beyond San Francisco, at the end of the valley, not even the trained and double-jointed automobiles of these parts can go. It is a sixty-kilometer ride over the range to Mocoa, and it must be done in one day. Some day the road will be pushed on, and the other new one from Ipiales to Puerto Asís will be joined with it, and people will begin to discover these lovely secret valleys where the temperature is 75° all the year round. Mocoa was once rather favored as a place to exile political adversaries, so it has enjoyed some very superior settlers. Some day I am going there; I have an invitation to stable my mule and put up my cot in a friendly hacienda, and it is too good to miss.

CHAPTER XXIV

The River

THE MAGDALENA is *the* river of Colombia. It is not the longest—both the Putumayo and the Caquetá are longer—but for four centuries its muddy, incalculable stream has been the main artery of trade and communication. It still is, in spite of the new roads, by hundreds of thousands of cargo-tons.

Although rivers are masculine in Spanish, the Magdalena is more worthy of its name than of the rules of grammar: generous and undisciplined, sinning and repentant. One is no longer obliged to confine oneself to it in order to reach the interior from the coast, and the big Boeings will take you from Bogotá to Barranquilla in two hours and forty minutes, but it will repay all except travelers with a low boiling point to take one of the little hydroplanes that fly the river to the coast. Twice a week one of these four-passenger Junkers (known as Puddlejumpers to their friends) goes down the Magdalena like a skipping stone, coming down ten times at sweltering ports en route; in eight and a quarter hours, during which you are cooked, as it were, *en casserole*, you can have a bird's-eye view of four hundred and forty varied years. To a large degree, the course of the Magdalena, cutting the country from south to north for nearly a thousand miles, is the course of Colombian history.

The planes take off from Girardot, which is the head of steam navigation. Above Girardot, river travel is by raft or canoe. Officially, the Magdalena is navigable to within ninety miles of its source, but it is not specified by what. A hundred miles up river is Neiva, capital of Huila, a Department as large as

Cundinamarca with about one sixth the population. Eder describes the trip by *champán*: "The embarkation, bestrided by the steadily working *bogas* often chanting their own rude poetry in rhythmical cadences, and thrown in bold relief against the dense riotous vegetation of the river bank, presents a picturesque scene that enchants both eye and ear." But, as the author adds, "Beauty is not comfort." There is a railway to Neiva now, and the practical has supplanted the picturesque.

When Eder wrote, in 1913, "there was not a single bank and not a single cartroad in the department." The torrid Huila plains did not invite settlers. Even Jiménez de Quesada, who went there in search of treasure and particularly "the pillar, very thick and high, all of solid gold" which rumor said was in one of the temples, turned back naming it the Valley of Sorrow. (The pillar was a fake, proving in the exact words of the sixteenth-century account that all was not gold that glitters.) Neiva (first founded in 1539, twice destroyed by the fierce Pijao Indians, and finally established on its present site in 1612) came to have a certain importance, however, because the mule trails to Popayán and to the Oriente started there. Rubber used to come through from the Caquetá, when South American rubber was sought after—as it may soon be again. Now there are about 370 miles of motor road, the main stem of which goes as far as Venecia, a diminutive port from which one may reach the Río Caquetá and eventually, but not easily, the Amazon. Roads are being pushed on across the Cordillera: one to Cali, one to Popayán, and one to Pasto; some day Neiva may again find itself an important center of communications.

The proposed highway route from the headwaters of the Magdalena to Popayán almost follows that Belalcázar took when he came searching for El Dorado—with one important variant. It goes through San Agustín, of whose existence the Conquistadores never guessed. To their ignorance we owe the preservation of an unsolved archeological mystery.

The valley of San Agustín contains an apparently inexhaustible supply of gigantic and grotesque statues carved in stone, of which more than three hundred have already been uncovered. Mute symbols of an enigmatic past, they duplicate nothing else so far uncovered in South America, although the figures have

certain features in common with those of Aztec and Mayan art, and suggest a possible affinity with the equally mysterious ruins of Tiahuanaca. Nothing, not even the undeciphered inscriptions engraved on some of them with tormenting clarity of line, has yet provided a clue to their makers. Caldas, that universal genius, first described them, and the Italian geographer Agostino Codazzi discovered them all over again in the middle of the nineteenth century. Since then the only exhaustive investigation has been that of Professor K. Th. Preuss, who published his findings, profusely illustrated, in 1924. But even Preuss, with all his profound scholarship and unusual preparation, did not hazard any conclusions as to the lost civilization that produced what he calls his "beloved giants." They are not pleasing, these squat and hideous divinities and sacred beasts standing in massive secrecy, but they are a fascinating field of speculation, and even single-minded scientists must find a monstrous humor in them. Some of the anthropomorphic figures are outfitted with paleolithic bowler hats; others wear eminently respectable toques well down on the forehead, with an irresistible air of petulant suburbanism. All of them bear expressions of intense ill temper: the more godly snarl magnificently in toothy passion, the less sublime range from malevolence to a kind of fretful superiority.

There are innumerable tombs on the slopes, but the soil has not favored preservation of human remains. And nowhere, in all the region, has there been found any vestige of a town, or any sign that normal living went on in the vicinity, or a single tool forgotten by a careless sculptor. The peoples who worked so indefatigably to turn out stone carvings either did not use their talents in construction, or they lived somewhere else. Was this only a sacred spot, favored for burial because of its sanctity and too holy for any but the dead? If so, perhaps there is a pre-Columbian city buried somewhere between the Magdalena and the Cauca, awaiting discovery. Archeological sleuths would also find an inviting field at Inzá, fifty miles in air line across the Central Cordillera from San Agustín. Here there are subterranean chambers entered by well-made stairs, walls painted with all-over patterns in subdued colors, and carved stone sarcophagi. Most of the prehistoric peoples of these lands were

buried in a sitting posture, as nearly as possible like that of an unborn child, going forth into the unknown as they first came from it. But in Inzá they were laid out full length, in sculptured caskets.

We have come a long way south from Girardot, the Magdalena port nearest to Bogotá. You can come down by train to meet the plane, or drive by car; in either case you must spend the night in what will seem, after the chill air of the Sabana, the hottest place in two continents. I do not know the railway route, but the road is lovely. Once across the plateau, it plunges down the precipitous face of the mountains to Fusagasugá, a resort in tierra templada where many well-to-do Bogotanos have week-end houses—since from the capital one goes down, not up, to vacation spots. Fusagasugá took a spurt of elegance when President Olaya Herrera built an ambitious villa there, prompting others to imitate the illustrious example.

It is always summer in Fusagasugá. (A difficult name; one understands the sad case of the American woman who returned from there to go to a party in Bogotá. At the end of a fuzzy evening someone asked the lady where she had been. Eying her questioner firmly, she answered, "Tunja." Her husband, surprised, corrected her. "Yes, yes," she said impatiently, "I know that's where I was, but I can't pronounce it.") It is hot enough to be pleasant, but no more—the altitude is still enough to give a kind of latent coolness that can be deceiving. The Colombian sun is never dangerous, and one forgets that regardless of the temperature, it is still an equatorial sun. I have a vivid recollection of a really royal sunburn acquired in just an hour beside a pool bordered with orchid-hung trees and lavishly garnished with cool drinks and caviar sandwiches. A week end can, and probably will, include bathing, riding across wide bare plains empty save for fat black and white cattle, tennis, visits, and maybe the local movie house. (The seats of that cinema are impressed on my mind as they once were on my anatomy; the angle of the bare wood and the fiendish plank across the back can only be the result of deliberate malice.) It should also include a visit to the little crowded garden of orchids and cactus and blazing bougainvillia strangely called the Luxembourg Garden, which bursts on you in a riot of color and vocal ma-

caws as you pass through the dark shop that screens it from the street.

The road from Fusagasugá to Girardot (we are taking a long while to get there, but the way is so much more rewarding than the goal) winds down through the mountains, leaving to the left Pasca, where Federmann came after his three years' wanderings in the llanos. It was to Pasca that *el capitán* Lázaro Fonte, one of Quesada's Conquistadores (he who, challenged to single combat, bore off his adversary by the hair) was exiled in chains by his irate General. Piedrahita tells how the Chibcha woman who loved him stayed by his side, and in the morning, dressed in all her finery, went forth to save her lord. She spoke to the still unpacified Panches of Pasca, telling them that a child of the Sun lay chained by the cruel Spaniards. It had taken five and twenty of them to bind him, she said, but even so, his force was such that he had prevented them from attacking the village. Come, she said, come and see; treat him with all reverence and he will continue to protect you, for he is as kind as he is mighty. "And as she had a lovely countenance, few years, and much grace, resolution and gallantry," Lázaro Fonte became a god in the land of exile.

There is a narrow gorge where the mountains drop into the rolling Magdalena valley, with dripping cliffs overhanging the road and the Río Bogotá boiling underneath. Five minutes later the landscape has changed to scrub, palms and blinding heat. White zebu cattle, which can resist the garapatas that infest the country, are apparently the only agricultural resource. This semi-barren countryside hardly seems capable of supporting a town with asphalt streets and a very good pool with a terrace restaurant, but Girardot, too, lives on coffee. Not by growing it, but by cleaning, hulling and packing it. Situated at the junction of the river, the Bogotá-Ibagué-Cali railway, the railway to Huila, and that to Ambalema and La Dorada, Girardot is hot but prosperous. Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-nego, that incombustible trio, would have done nicely there; the parallel barriers of the Cordilleras, rising to 11,000 feet on one side of the river and to the 18,500-foot snowfields of Tolima on the other, shut off any stray breath of cooler air. If there seems a certain emphasis on the temperature, I would

point out to those who claim that Honda is hotter—a favorite point of discussion—that it was only in Girardot that my wax matches melted together inside the box to a solid indistinguishable mass.

The plane stops at nine ports on its way north, and between the towns it touches and those it leaves below, it shows you the physical basis of adventure, romance, tragedy and modern progress. No other way of reaching the coast can compare with it, for in the express planes you see only the distant pattern, and in a boat you have only yellow water and close-grown banks, with no notion of their relation to the rest of the country. But in the Puddlejumper you have both; the distance shots and the close-ups, the panorama and the detail.

Almost every town has its memories of Conquistadores, patriots and battles; to me each one has some particular thing that marks it from the others. These are frankly capricious in choice. Thus Honda, where boat passengers and freight from the upper river must disembark and take a railway around the rapids to La Dorada, means above all the Hermit of La Tolda, who lived for eleven years in a cave without so much as a bed, methodically digging for the fabulous treasure of the cacique. He never was known to speak, and the people called him *El Sordo*, the Deaf One. But when he was found dead, half-eaten by vultures, they discovered that the name should have been *La Sorda*, for the man of the caverns was a woman. They buried the poor remains under a stone which reads: "To the Memory of the Unknown."

A few miles inland is Mariquita, which means gold and silver and coffee, which was for eight years the field laboratory of the *Espedición Botánica*, but which to me is first of all the place where Gonzalo Jiménez de Quesada, tired, old, poor and some say a leper, died in 1579.

Past the twin ports of Salgar and La Dorada, which together account for more freight than any other river port, and beyond Puerto Berrío, which with its railway to Medellín and road to the Sabana runs La Dorada-Salgar a close second, the plane comes down at Barranca Bermeja, once called *Latora* by the Indians. Here, behind—four hundred years behind—the

Tropical Oil concession, and the affluent, apathetic town, and the big refinery, there are the Conquistadores, to whom the "boiling fountains" of crude were just a mild curiosity in a land prodigal of much stranger phenomena. What interested them was, as usual, food, and at Latora there was "algo de comer"—something to eat.

The pause at Barranca Bermeja was the turning point in Quesada's enterprise. Scouts had reported that it was impossible to go on, yet the General felt that "to go back was not to his honor, for it seemed unworthy of him and of the many other gentlemen and soldiers who were with him to turn back without having accomplished anything that was in his eyes memorable or worthy to be written." Fortunately, an advance exploring party brought back encouraging news from the Río Opón: they had found a cabin stored with rock salt prepared for barter, and a hint of a way up the mountains. The expedition went on. One Lucullan feast broke the aching famine of those days: "a dog that made the mistake of coming with them from Latora" (one of the pretty "butterfly dogs" that are now a specialty of Barranca?) "with whose meat a famous banquet was prepared for the leaders, that was by them esteemed no less than those some Roman emperors gave, in which they spent a great part of the revenues of their Empire."

This is the picture beyond the refinery and the bungalows and the golf club, beyond the pump station and the tanks and the flying field: a group of ravaged, famished men in rusted armor and rotted fragments of clothes, sitting down between the river and the jungle and devouring one stray dog to the last paw and piece of skin.

Past Puerto Wilches, five hours' flight from Girardot, is Gamarra. Bolívar passed here on his way to Ocaña and Cúcuta, and so, of course, did every expedition, every viceroy and commissioner and judge, every hopeful adventurer with his eyes fixed on fame and fortune. The way up, however hard, was lighted with glowing hopes. Going downstream it was less cheerful: then the travelers were governors under charges of malfeasance, the disappointed and the failures. Yet in spite of all the pageant of four centuries, Gamarra in my mind is tied to Alfinger, the ruthless German from Coro, who came from

Maracaibo in 1531, followed the valley of the Cesar to the Magdalena, and from this point turned up into the Cordillera. I see his sick and starving men-at-arms, forced on by their leader's brutal will, and the long file of Indian porters, chained together from their iron collars, staggering under burdens too great for bearing. When one died, the straining line wavered to a halt, waiting in numb misery while the head was cut from his lifeless body, and then struggled on with one more empty length of chain where a stained neck-iron swung and clattered against the stones. It is pleasant to recall that Alfinger died of a poisoned arrow between Ocaña and Cúcuta.

La Gloria, a singularly inappropriately named collection of squalid adobe houses, means the unhappy men, too sick for marching, whom Bolívar left there on his way to fresh triumphs, and who are buried in the local cemetery. From the river it makes a perfect picture—steep thatched roofs among the palms thrown into relief by the dark forest behind. If there should be a sunset around when you see it thus, one of those dramatic, fire-over-the-jungle sunsets of the Magdalena, you might carry all your life a memory of La Gloria lovely as a dream, and people who had examined it from the land side in the crude light of day would think you mad.

Puerto Sagoc, a few miles below, has no recollections of Conquistadores or liberators. It is the new South American Gulf Oil camp built where the Barco pipeline crosses under the Magdalena. My private snapshot here is of a long tin roof sheltering a collection of badly battered trucks, and of the chief mechanic patting one particularly gruesome wreck affectionately and saying, "This is all right—a good truck still." Incidentally, this ability to doctor the casualties of the road saved Sagoc half a million dollars in a year of construction, halving their losses on material.

El Banco, thirty minutes' flight down river, is the Conquest again. It lies just below the city of the Chief Tamalameque, "a powerful lord feared by his neighbors in war and peace." Quesada forced the narrow causeway to the Indian town, and for twenty days his men ate their way steadily through the food stores—the last full meals before they reached the Sabana. De Lerma came in 1529 and sent his captains on to discover the

Lebrija. Alfinger came, sowing death and enmity that cost his successors dear. Of all the Conquistadores who followed the Río Cesar from Santa Marta and Valle Dupar, Juan de Sanmartín and Juan de Céspedes knew Tamalameque best, for they came three times. And on the second of those expeditions—the one one that aimed at reaching the Sinú, and that nearly ended in complete disaster when floods covered the country and the Spaniards, swimming for their lives, were awaited on every piece of dry land by hostile Indians—there happened the incident of my choice. Sanmartín and Céspedes, “persons of notable magnificence and virtue,” had been plagued by a captain of macheteros, one Santos de Saavedra, “who being somewhat turbulent and of unquiet spirit . . . meddled in more affairs than he had a right to.” Saavedra finally went too far, but the commanders “seemed not to notice this effrontery, or even see it.” They merely invited all the troops to a party and took the opportunity to quietly garrote the troublesome captain and throw him in the river. The fiesta was a complete success.

It is said that east of the river, in the basin drained—somewhat ineffectually—by the Cesar, ten billion tons of coal lurk beneath the matted green. It may be; to date it does not matter whether there is one ton or ten billion or none, for the backlands are hardly changed from those the men of Santa Marta saw.

Neither the big river boats nor the hydroplanes stop now at Mompós, the “Valiant City” of the Independence. Once the greatest trading center on the Magdalena, a shift of current has left it to stagnate on a back channel. It is hard to decide on one scene for Mompós, so long a port of call and commerce, successively won and lost for the ten years of the Revolution until Córdoba freed it in what is described as a “naval battle.” Alonso de Heredia, who founded it in 1539, did not stay long enough to leave an impress; Simón Bolívar took it too easily and later abandoned it too readily. There was, of course, don Pedro Martínez de Pinillos, the wealthy merchant who gave his fortune to establish there the first practical school of the New Realm. This was the college of St. Peter the Apostle, where “we do not pay much attention to nobility or purity of blood,” but which paid a great deal to useful education; which sent scholarship students to Europe and sought to develop local

industry. On the whole, however, Mompós must be for me the Marquesa de Torre Hoyos.

The Marquesa was the great lady of Mompós, mistress of a million acres between the Magdalena and the Cauca, a handsome widow who knew her own mind. She had a *galère* rowed by slaves in livery and a coach to go abroad in the narrow limits of the town; when Morillo came and quartered there, she could offer him his pick from a herd of a thousand saddle horses. Her palace still stands; it is stripped of its one-time splendor, but it must have been a fine sight when the Marquesa celebrated her marriage to the cadet she had chosen from Morillo's staff. She selected her consort with the frank serenity of royalty bestowing the august hand, remarking that she had everything she needed but a husband, and that this seemed a favorable opportunity to remedy a situation she was beginning to find tedious. The General was best man.

It was through the Marquesa that Mompós became improbably linked to Salt Lake City. When she was an old lady she ceded her immense estate to a Mormon company founded by Jesse Knight, a friend and colleague of Brigham Young. At first the badgered and tenacious Brothers planned a colony beside the Magdalena, but floods and drought and fever discouraged the agent sent down from Utah, while the problem of securing valid title proved enough to try even a Latter Day Saint. A much later attempt to develop a cattle ranch with imported Hereford stock was unsuccessful; the present Jesse Knight, grandson of the first, is said to have found little return from the million acres beyond those providentially provided by the passage of the Barco right-of-way. It seems unlikely that the Children of God will ever settle the lands of the Marquesa de Torre Hoyos.

The plane makes one side stop: at Magangué, a port on the Río Cauca a little above its confluence with the Magdalena. From there on it is a straight hour-and-a-quarter flight to Barranquilla. Thus one cannot even identify two tiny places whose names are familiar to every Colombian. Tenerife does not rate a landing, and Barranca is not even on the map, but the little villages have a place in all the history books. When Bolívar turned up in Cartagena in 1812, young, fiery and

inspiring beyond anything his previous record warranted, his amazing force and eloquence brought him rapidly to the notice of the patriot leaders. The upshot was the commission to hold the hamlet of Barranca. The Cartageneros were sufficiently persuaded to have given him greater scope, but the military commander, General Labatut, was determined to clip the young eagle's wings. Pierre Labatut was a French volunteer who had come to South America with the Venezuelan Precursor Miranda, to whom he was bound by friendship from the time when they had both served Napoleon. He had not forgotten that if Miranda was at that moment chained like a dog in the terrible prison of Cádiz it was because Bolívar, among others, had betrayed him to the Spanish.

The future Liberator, however, was made to give orders, not to obey them. He had been refused authority to leave Barranca by his superior officer, but Labatut was far away in Santa Marta, and Bolívar proceeded to take his men up river, occupying Tenerife without a shot. After this bloodless victory, Bolívar did not bother about authorization. Serenely ignoring the military code and the fulminations of his General, he went on in what turned out to be highly successful defiance. Mompós welcomed him with acclaim, and was left behind; El Banco was abandoned to him by the Spaniards; Tamalameque and Puerto Real offered no resistance. The only battle of the whole miraculous campaign was at Chiriguaná, where the royalist garrison of El Banco was pursued and defeated. By the time he reached Ocaña, in the mountains above Gamarra, the enthusiasm of the patriots knew no bounds; it was evident that if Bolívar was a total loss as a subordinate and an unwilling collaborator on equal grounds, he was truly magnificent as a leader.

The trip is almost over. The mountains have dwindled and drawn away. The shadow of the plane runs swiftly over woven jungles, lakes, morasses and meadows patched with poisonous green scum; the whole expanse is scrawled with watercourses like a child's drawing block. From occasional villages and isolated homesteads, standing neat and rectangular without visible means of support, threadlike trails wander off to unknown destinations. Calamar, where the Canal del Dique, the

railway and the Andian pipeline turn off to Cartagena, is left behind. In front is the sea, and Barranquilla spreading for miles beside the river. If you are lucky, you will have a view of the Sierra Nevada de Santa Marta, floating in blue and silver incredibly far from earth. The Magdalena has grown to a mighty sheet of yellow water; as the plane banks, the ocean steamers moored at the new Marine Terminal, sixteen miles inland, rise to meet you. A long swoop, and you scud to a concrete dock framed by the languid elegance of palms.

CHAPTER XXV

Capital in Concrete

BARRANQUILLA is a busy modern seaport at the mouth of the Magdalena River, with a population of 150,000 souls. It has one of the best hotels in South America, well-kept asphalt streets, miles of garden suburbs, an unlimited supply of pure water and an airport of the first magnitude. It has these things now, but twenty years ago it was different. Nowhere in Colombia does the I-remember-when school have more scope; almost anyone except the rawest *chapelón* (a word signifying tenderfoot, or more exactly, dude, invented for verdant new arrivals by Conquistadores who knew their way about) can be a member in good standing.

Twenty years ago there were no paved roads and few automobiles. Little carriages lurched over the bumps, raising clouds of dust or sheets of mud and water according to the season; the passers-by dodged and cursed; the passengers held on and hoped for the best. There was no drinking water; each family kept a supply in big Ali Baba jars called *tinajas*, and boiled and filtered it at home. The population was 64,000 and the infant mortality was appalling. There was no Hotel del Prado, no flying field, no green and charming residential section, no sewage system, no stadium, no automatic telephones. Most remarkable of all, it was not a seaport.

Barranquilla is built twelve miles up the river from the Bocas de Ceniza—the Mouth of Ashes—where the Magdalena empties into the Caribbean. For two hundred and fifty years its status was that of an unimportant hamlet; traffic for and from the interior passed by way of Cartagena or Santa Marta, and it

was referred to, when anyone thought to mention it, as "a small village about a league from Soledad." Ships avoided the tricky entrance, where the first discoverer, Rodrigo de Bastidas, came near being wrecked in 1500. Bastidas, a wealthy notary of Seville who left his sober estate in answer to a tardy call to adventure, took with him Juan de la Cosa, the pilot who sailed with Columbus, and a highly lucrative time was had by all. They left an obscure member of the crew at Santo Domingo on the return voyage—one Vasco Núñez, whom we call Balboa.

In 1827 the first all-steam-powered ship, the Dutch vessel *Curaçao*, crossed the Atlantic from Europe to South America. Quite suddenly, winds and calms and currents no longer dominated the entrance to the Magdalena. Ships came up to cast anchor in the river, and Barranquilla became a place of some importance. Then in 1880 the Bocas silted up, and no deep-draft boats could cross the bar. The chief river port of Colombia was without access to the sea.

The Mouth of Ashes is a delta mouth, and it seemed hopeless to try and battle the constant accumulation of debris and sand. An English company built a mile-long pier near Sabanilla, west of the Bocas, and Puerto Colombia came into existence. There was a railway to connect it with Barranquilla, and three trains a day covered the seventeen-mile stretch in just over an hour. All this was very nice for the company, but considerably less so for the shippers. Cargo was handled seven times between the river and the ship, five of them by hand. Anyone who has watched in helpless agony while their trunks and boxes are tossed negligently out of baggage cars onto a concrete quay will realize what this meant, apart from the expense involved.

Meanwhile the volume of trade was increasing steadily. The Colombian government decided to face the problem squarely, and an American firm was given a contract to open the Bocas to traffic. There was, of course, the usual animated controversy, but in 1925 work was begun. It continued, rather spasmodically, for four years, when the money ran out. That was 1929. In 1933 the Government entrusted the job to the Barranquilla Port and Terminal Company, composed of the Raymond Concrete Pile Company of New York, Winston Brothers of Minneapolis, Parrish and Company of Barranquilla, and the Missouri

Valley Bridge and Iron Company of Fort Leavenworth. The Raymond Concrete Pile Company, "sponsor" of the B. P. and T., had already, among its multitudinous construction jobs, built the port and docks at Buenaventura and developed the port of Maracaibo (they were also in the group that built the Bay Bridge, the largest cantilever bridge in the world). With a member of the London firm of Sir Alexander Gibb as consultant for the government, they started building the 5,890-foot parallel jetties that were to persuade the current to keep on going till it reached deep water.

By August 1935 the training walls were practically completed, when Nature came into the picture and as usual stole the show. On August thirtieth, September first and September second, a series of gigantic landslides carried the whole accumulation of material at the river mouth—an estimated 328,000,000 cubic yards—over the brink of the deep that lies just off shore. They carried away more than 900 feet of the west jetty at the same time, rolling the twenty-ton stones to the bottom of the sea, and snapped a transatlantic cable seventeen miles off the coast, but these were minor inconveniences beside the glorious fact that in three days the channel had been opened. They didn't even have to rebuild the jetty; the river, harnessed within its walls, keeps the entrance clean, and when the dry season comes, the northeast trade winds obligingly whip up the ocean currents to carry on the work.

Ships tie up to the new concrete dock at Barranquilla, which has modern warehouses and a double *darsena* for river boats. The operators expect to get a more than comfortable return in port dues and related receipts, for today two thirds of Colombia's import and export trade flows through Barranquilla.

Modern Barranquilla is inextricably mixed with the Parishes, and particularly with the late Karl C. Parrish, of Des Moines and Colombia. Karl Parrish came to Colombia about 1905. He was a mining engineer, and he worked the first quartz mine in the Department of Bolívar, near the borders of Antioquia. Most mining men have a single-minded passion for the job they have trained for, but Parrish had other ideas. He wanted to build a modern city, a city that would be clean and proud, that would face north from the Caribbean coast with

all the facilities and comforts for pleasant living. Perhaps because the Department of Bolívar is administered from Cartagena, perhaps because it is a natural port far superior to Barranquilla, he wanted to see this done in Cartagena. But the Cartageneros were tepid to the whole upsetting scheme, and so Parrish transferred his attentions to Barranquilla.

Karl Parrish had enthusiasm and ability, and he also had a quality whose importance can never be sufficiently stressed in these countries below the Río Grande. He was liked. This invaluable asset depended in turn on the fact that he liked Colombia and the Colombians. Somebody who knew him well said to me the other day:

"Karl had the most extraordinary gift for friendship. Presidents and peons were happy to have him in their houses, and he went to each with the same unaffected pleasure. When he went down the street you could tell how much people thought of him just by seeing how they greeted him. When the Government gave the Cross of Boyacá to Karl's widow, it meant something."

Parrish formed the El Prado Company in the early 1920's. With funds from a municipal loan made by the Central Trust Company of Chicago—\$2,500,000 from 1925 to 1928—and the co-operation of local progressives, he proceeded to turn the bare, sunbaked high ground outside the city into avenues lined with modern houses, each in its own garden, with garages and electric kitchens and built-in closets and tiled bathrooms. The Hotel del Prado was built at the exact point where every ounce of wind catches its spreading wings. It is a perfect hotel for the climate, particularly if one is fond of walking; the plan is a giant U, and the structure is just one room and a veranda deep—one room with its bath, and a veranda that is the grandmother of all verandas. The doors have slatted, screened openings top and bottom for cross ventilation, so that as you walk the quarter mile or so to the elevator you hear snatches of conversation in rapid succession: "If they want to put \$5,000 into it—she ought to know that at her age—twenty-ton precast—I don't know how you expect me to—Darling!" interspersed with the shoosh of showers. It is like twirling the dial on a radio. From January to April or so, the trade winds nearly blow you out of bed, but there is air conditioning if you

want it, as you well may in the other months. There is also a really elegant pool, a grill, a bar that leads a very active life, and dancing twice a week.

There have been other real-estate developments since Karl Parrish demonstrated what energy, vision and two and a half million dollars would do in a co-operative community. Un-exportable profits (those currency laws), reinvested, built the Stadium and other improvements. The Syrian owner of the beautiful, oriental-looking house just across the way from the golf course is responsible for whole new sections. There is a big new apartment building halfway downtown, and the National City Bank has just put up the first all air-conditioned office building.

The filtration plant, which takes the thick river water and turns it into pure drinking water, is the pride and joy of Barranquilla. You have to have lived in countries where such things are fascinating novelties to understand why; like the Empire State Building or Rockefeller Center, every visitor is escorted to see it. One certainly comes away with a new respect for such institutions after seeing the raw material for that crystal product. It is about the color and consistency of curry soup, but at least the supply is inexhaustible.

The number of industrial plants has jumped in eight years from 200 to 1,200, though the picture this suggests of a second Birmingham falls into proportion when one realizes that anything over twenty employees is an industrial plant. There are textile mills (cotton, silk, rayon) and flour mills, a brewery, factories for shoes, hats, pharmaceutical preparations, soap, oil, and so forth, a large sawmill whose owner would only have to draw on his own experiences to make the kind of book every lover of far places dreams about, if only it would occur to him to do so.

To visit the Obregón mill, for instance, is a complete course in cotton in one easy lesson. It takes in the bolls at one end, straight from canoes that tie up outside the caño gate, and turns out everything from plain and fancy piece goods to gents' knitted underwear at the other. From the time the sacks of raw cotton are emptied and various weighty foreign bodies like stones, scrap iron and old sewing machines firmly sorted from

their middles, to when the serried ranks of finished goods are stacked ready for the retailer, everything is under one roof. Summed up, this means weighing, drying, ginning, baling, cleaning, carding, spinning, sizing, weaving, dyeing, bleaching, calendering, inspection, and packing. The factory is turning out at present about 400,000 yards of cloth a month. The knitted things are a sideline, with particular emphasis on under-vests in tender pink and blue that the ultimate consumer may wear as an outer garment. There are also blankets.

Offhand, one would say that the active Obregons (who among other things are practically the owners of the Hotel del Prado) could not lose; in spite of this and other big modern mills here and in Medellín and elsewhere, Colombia imported cotton textiles to the tune of 11,766,142 pesos in 1938, apart from the importation of raw cotton and yarn and that of simple cotton manufactures.

The increased industrial activity of Barranquilla is brought home to resident and visitor alike, indirectly but inescapably, every time the lights go out. The paragraph in the legislation of 1936 that authorized expropriation of enterprises "of public utility" struck the power company like a chill wind; price regulation cast an added gloom. While the requirements of the city leaped forward like a stag at morn, the power situation resembled a rather undernourished sloth. Now, however, matters are adjusted, and the plant is being expanded and renewed to take care handsomely of all those new factories and charming houses with their electric kitchens as well as those that are still to be built. Soon the demand for candles and primus stoves will fall off, and beauty parlor clients will no longer be stranded, hooked by a score of pulleys to a defunct permanent-wave machine in a sulphurous and helpless rage.

One is not tempted to "go to the country"; the green-planted suburbs are cooler, and the Club, complete with golf and tennis and swimming, is conveniently at hand. There is bathing at Puerto Colombia and at Salgar—a nice place in the late afternoon, when drying nets spread a web across the sunset and the tall palms are dark along the shore. Shooting (no closed season) is apparently good, and of course specially so when migrating birds come over; I have no direct experience, but

anything that will make stout souls arise at 2:00 A.M. to go and huddle for hours in a wet blind must be rewarding. The really superlative sport, however, is fishing. Not the contemplative fishing of summer lakes or the esoteric artistry of casting, but the muscular variety.

Offshore from the Bocas de Ceniza there is what Captain Tom Gifford, who should know, calls "the finest tarpon fishing in the world, twelve months in the year." When the trades are blowing, it is too rough for small craft, and there are not, as yet, properly equipped blue-water boats for the purpose, but from May to August it is calm, and the supply of game fish is almost embarrassing. Sailfish, blue marlin, and Allison tuna abound. I know one Barranquillan who took eleven tarpon in three hours; there are big fellows up to 145, 150 and even 175 pounds (this last is the record to date, caught by Angel Bonfante) that will give as good sport as one could wish. The sharks are apt to give rather more than is desirable; Wilds of the Prado told me of hooking one, and said it was like being hitched to a particularly erratic comet. The complete sportsman might combine some fishing with a shooting trip farther up country, where there is everything from quail to tapir and duck to jaguar. Facilities will no doubt soon be available; Barranquilla, always alive to opportunity, is beginning to realize that any place within twenty-four hours of New York that can so abundantly satisfy the human instinct to hunt has something worth developing. Jaded executives in Chicago and Manhattan and Grand Rapids, when gripped by the primeval urge to the chase, will send a wire, telephone the air line, and two days later be in strenuous and perfectly organized communion with nature.

CHAPTER XXVI

Santa Marta of the New Kingdom

SANTA MARTA, magnificently set between the soaring Sierras and the sea on a deep natural harbor, is the oldest city in South America. It is also the only one founded by a man who had to be shanghaied aboard his own vessel for the purpose.

In 1524 Rodrigo de Bastidas signed a contract with Charles V to colonize a tract of his own choosing anywhere between Cabo de la Vela and the mouth of the Magdalena. Owing to the fact that nothing whatever was known of the country beyond its northern façade, the grant was one-dimensional, specifying only that it was to extend for eighty leagues along the coast. Inland boundaries were left to the ability of the conquerors and the degree of resistance offered by the Indians—an unavoidable haziness that has caused a good deal of trouble first and last.

Twenty-one years in Santo Domingo on a plump Crown pension had dimmed the spirit of the ex-notary of Seville; the days when he sailed in Columbus' wake and beyond were a quarter of a century away. Bastidas planned to do his colonizing by remote control, a Conquistador turned capitalist. He therefore recruited eight hundred men (the number of unemployed soldiers of fortune hanging around for a little job in perilous discovery in those very early days is a continual surprise) and sent them off to Santa Marta. The next year, up to his ears in debt, he outfitted another ship, and one fine day in February 1525 went down to the wharf to wave good-by to his men. Here he was seized in mid-wave, as it were, and bundled aboard the brigantine, which immediately up-anchored and stood out to sea. It was a snatch animated by the most elevated motives,

based on the hope that his authoritative presence would prevent all the underlings from exterminating one another in uncontrolled high spirits, but it must have been annoying to be headed for Conquest without even a clean shirt. Two years later, when Bastidas sailed from Santa Marta to return to Santo Domingo, he was the victim of another trick; the captain took him to Cuba instead, where he died within a few months, perhaps of the aftereffects of an attack on his life.

Bastidas had appointed a lieutenant-governor to substitute for him in the little "city" of straw huts beside the bay. This was el capitán Rodrigo Álvarez Palomino, my pet Conquistador. The local Indians were still moderately friendly, though they must have been puzzled at the goings-on among the strangers whom they had taken in with that expansive hospitality that is based on the belief that the recipients are going somewhere else almost immediately. But for Palomino, even the warier tribes had a feeling far beyond the negative tolerance of hosts whose guests have failed to take the Monday morning train. "He was much feared and, in a certain way, loved by the Indians," wrote a contemporary, Fray Antonio Medrano, the priest who died in the search for El Dorado with Quesada, "for he treated them with severity and affection, with one hand chastising them and with the other caressing them; and he had a horse named Matamoros, very spirited and strong, on which Palomino did things which the Indians admired greatly." When the lieutenant-governor demonstrated that in addition to his talents as a fighter and a horseman, which would make him eligible for the lead in any of the lustier romantic films, he could also foretell rain, the natives adopted him as a god.

"Nowadays they keep him in their sanctuaries, represented in statues of gold, riding his horse Matamoros, armed as when he went to war, with his lance in his hand, and give him the honor and veneration they pay the greatest of their gods," said the chronicler, with a mixture of pride and disapproval. "And so great is the stubbornness of these barbarous people in the things of their false and vain religion, that once they take to themselves a religious belief, afterwards no adverse fortune or sign has power to tear it from their hearts." Palomino's end was suitably dramatic. Riding with his men between the moun-

tains and the sea, he spurred Matamoros into a river swollen by the rains, and was never seen again. The riderless horse was led down to camp draped in black with stirrups reversed. No trace of the body was found, and the Indians said that he had gone back to live with the other gods, his equals.

Santa Marta faces west, just where the coast line turns sharply to meet the Ciénaga. The sierras rise directly from the sea; they must climb 18,700 feet in thirty miles, and have no time to lose. Somewhere behind the lovely, landlocked harbor, in that jumble of peaks and ranges, lies the Valley of Tairona. The first settlers knew nothing of a general Tairona culture extending from Santa Marta east along the coast, and certainly never dreamed of tying it to peoples across the Caribbean in Central America. To them the inhabitants of each district were a separate people, and the Taironas were one distinct tribe living in one well-identified valley. Which valley, they unfortunately neglected to note with any precision for posterity. Aguado, who copied the manuscript of a man who "saw it happen" gives a tantalizing account of an expedition that was highly successful. "The Governor García de Lerma . . . inasmuch as some [Spaniards] were left without fortune or Indians, sent to discover and see the Valley of Tairona, which is joined to the Sierras Nevadas of Santa Marta, and to this end he sent the Captains Juan Muñoz and Juan de la Feria with two hundred men, who entered with such good fortune into Tairona, that in addition to not taking action, the natives of that Valley, who are a warlike and untamed people with arms to defend the entrance, gave them a present of more than 80,000 pesos of fine gold, and so without having confirmed peace or declared war they again went out, and returned to Santa Marta content with their riches."

A great many people would like to know where the tribes who lived around the base of the Sierra got their gold. The total gold production of the entire Department was only a little over \$40,000 last year—about as much as Palomino used to clean up in one small village. Most of all, they would like to find the Tairona valley of the old records. The only maps I have seen that mention it (though it may appear in others) are a group printed in the Netherlands between 1635 and 1667, which show

a valley running southeast toward the snows labeled Val de Tayrna, but since the cartographers of the period were often animated more by a laudable desire not to leave anything out than by a thirst for exact knowledge, and since the maps are copies of one another, even this clue is not to be taken too seriously.

Whatever the origin of the pre-Columbian peoples who lived along the northern slopes of the Sierra Nevada, they had a distinctive and homogeneous culture. Unlike the far more advanced Chibchas, they built in stone, so well that four and a half centuries of sun and storm and wind have not entirely destroyed their work. All along the coast between Santa Marta and Dibulla there are village sites, terraces faced with masonry, aqueducts and reservoirs, cemeteries with stone-lined tombs. The Tairona highways can still be seen—paved, graded, and shored, with stone bridges and covered drains. Sometimes these roads are more than twenty feet wide; steep passages are built in stone steps. Most of the objects I have seen that came from this section were necklaces of semi-precious stones and terra cotta vases of animist design.

Jiménez de Quesada took an expedition out from Santa Marta in search of some lost city, "rich, and very strong, built all of stone, and reached by a stone causeway," but he never found it. What he did find, high up in the hills, was El Conquistador Marobaré. Marobaré the Conqueror was a small gray donkey that had somehow strayed into the mountains, and who announced his presence by piercing brays to the surprised discoverers. They brought him back to the settlement, and later Quesada took him on the expedition to the Sabana, conferring his title upon him with appropriate solemnity.

Colonial Santa Marta, nestled between the mountains and the sea, led the same feudal and somnolent life of other New Granadan towns, though like Cartagena, its patrician repose was rudely interrupted from time to time by French and British pirates. Robert Baal, Jean and Martin Côte, Sir Francis Drake with the slaver Hawkins, all sacked and burnt the city within the space of fifty-two years, and the well-organized buccaneers and filibusters of Haiti, Santo Domingo and Jamaica gave intermittent trouble all through the seventeenth century. But

Santa Marta merely shook itself, buried its dead, rebuilt and continued as before.

Except for the ephemeral Junta of 1810 and a fleeting occupation by the Cartageneros under Labutut, Santa Marta was thoroughly royalist all through the Revolution. (It would be interesting to know what a Gallup poll would have shown in New Granada on the freedom issue.) In 1820 it was forced to yield to patriot troops. Three years later there was a curious flare-up when three hundred and twenty Indians from the Ciénaga region descended on the city and held it for eighteen gloriously bibulous days. The British representative who disembarked there a few months later (received by Governor Saida, "a civil and rather agreeable man" whose many and lurid adventures included ransom from the Berbers at the rather humiliating price of a few silk handkerchiefs kindly donated by the French consul at Tangiers) was dismayed at the deserted appearance of the streets and the pillaged houses. Nearly all the royalists had left, either voluntarily or by force, and the Indian occupation had completed the exodus.

Just outside Santa Marta, a league or so by asphalt highway, is the hacienda San Pedro Alejandrino, where in 1830 Simón Bolívar was carried to spend his last despairing days. There, a puny wasted body lying in a borrowed bed, the eyes that were brilliant and conquering dulled by pain and bitter disillusion, he coughed out his life. Nearly all those who had companioned him were dead, or far away, or faithless; the splendid dreams and gallantry had crumbled into quarrels and rivalry and betrayal. There was turmoil and disorder in the countries that called him Liberator; in Bogotá plans were afoot to summon a prince of France to be King of Colombia. For the first time Bolívar recognized defeat. The spirit that had defied Spain was finished like the hard-living, hard-loving body that despised fatigue. "All who have served the Revolution have ploughed the sea," he said, looking at last on failure.

The house at San Pedro belonged to don Joaquín Manuel Faustino de Mier y Terán, a compassionate enemy whose father, don Faustino de Mier, had been Spanish governor of Santa Marta. Don Faustino died a King's man in the dungeons of

Cartagena while his son was fighting with the Viceroy Sámano. His wife knew he was dead when the close-written letters stopped coming—those letters that begin: “María Teresa of my heart and soul,” and that are kept now in a drawer of the secretaire Bolívar used for his last unhappy proclamation.

“Curious, isn’t it,” said doña María Teresa’s great-grandson, as he took the letters from me and folded them up again, “five countries worshiped Bolívar because he freed them from Spain—yet the only roof to shelter him at the end was the roof of a Spaniard.”

For twelve years the body of the Liberator lay in the Cathedral of Santa Marta. Then, a flourishing epilogue to tragedy, the Venezuelan warship *Constitución*, sent to bring Bolívar home, put into the harbor, escorted by warships of Holland, England and France. The air shuddered to the slow boom of cannon, the sound of muffled drums mingled with liturgical chants and the clang of church bells, as the Commissioners of Venezuela and New Granada, the civil and military authorities, the Governor’s guard (barefoot, in bearskin busbies and scarlet coats), marched down to the beach behind the coffin. The fleet stood out past El Morro and El Morillón, sails white in the sun, flags at half-mast.

In the Cathedral there still stood a small leaden casket, for when Bolívar went away for the last time from Colombia, he left his heart in Santa Marta. Inexplicably and unpardonably, it has disappeared. All that remains in the city where he died are the things that were lent him for the last ten days, kept by don Joaquín’s grandchildren in the great colonial houses whose massive walls hold traditions safe and memories untarnished. Among these is a lovely crystal service of decanters, three of them still half filled with liqueurs. The fourth is empty; it held brandy, and somehow that empty decanter, which the good Dr. Révèrend must have used to hold off the end a little longer, is more poignant than all San Pedro, and the monuments and tablets of remorseful adulation.

If ancient Santa Marta is Conquistadores and old Santa Marta is liberators, modern Santa Marta is—bananas. The ships that come into the deep harbor under the mountains do

not sail with gold and pearls for Spain, but with stems of fruit for New York and half the world. Last year the Magdalena Fruit Company, the Colombian organization of United Fruit, shipped between seven and eight million stems. A single cargo is worth as much as all the gold de Lerma's captains got from the Taironas.

The banana zone, or more familiarly, the Zone, begins south of Ciénaga town and extends all along the flats between the Sierra and the lagoon. It holds 40,000 acres of producing farms, 20 per cent of them belonging to the Company, 80 per cent divided into holdings that vary in size from one to 2,000 acres. The Company buys fruit from six hundred and thirty-five different farmers, and pays them 40 cents a stem at the railway. Good planted land is worth about \$180 an acre, and an acre will hold 500 to 600 trees—which means, by and large, 300 stems a year. Many a Colombian has led the more abundant life in Paris or London on a foundation entirely composed of bananas.

A gross annual return of 66 per cent on initial investment would seem enough to inspire anyone who could assemble a few thousand dollars with a burning desire to buy land in the Zone and let bountiful nature work for him until increased production ruined the market. After all, the trees mature in ten months, and although they are cut down to get the fruit, they have thoughtfully provided shoots which in their turn produce within the year, and so on. There is even plenty of Government land, there for the asking, which can be cleared and planted for \$35 or so an acre. But as usual, there is a less glowing side to the picture.

It takes a good deal of labor to look after a grove big enough to be interesting, if only for the cutting—to choose, cut and transport several hundred bunches in a day. Not every stem makes the grade when it must pass the inspectors. There are blowdowns that wipe out thousands of trees in a few hours. And as far as new developments are concerned, there is no more water. The rivers that run their brief course from the Sierra to the Ciénaga become semi-stagnant meanderings in the dry season, and their capacity for irrigation is about exhausted. Also, within the last few years, an undesirable alien has come from the Dutch East Indies, and come to stay.

This is sigatoka, so named from its place of origin, a leaf mold that, left unchecked, would destroy the groves in a few years. Like all pests, it is a wide and willing traveler with no provincial nonsense about seeing Sumatra first. From the East Indies it went to Australia, to Central America, to the West Indies; the Jamaica Negroes, fatalistic before misfortune, call it the God-sickness. Large American companies, however, have a less mystic approach. Research departments went into a flurry of activity, and as a result hundreds of thousands of acres from Colombia to Honduras were saved—at least as far as sigatoka is concerned. Panama disease is another story—without a happy ending, for P.D. is inexorable. No cure has been found for it; burning over does not destroy it, and it will live quite happily in the ground—too deep for treatment—waiting patiently and apparently indefinitely for a banana tree to come along. But spraying with Bordeaux mixture will prevent leaf mold from getting to the danger point, and since the lesser evil can sometimes take on a certain air of good fortune (to the anxious father who fears triplets, twins are a blessed relief) Santa Marta farmers spray their sigatoka-stained trees almost cheerfully, grateful that there is as yet no trace of the dread P.D. in Colombia.

It costs money to keep sigatoka under, for the trees have to be treated at regular and frequent intervals. Together with the double washing the fruit must receive before shipment—in muriatic acid to take off the Bordeaux, and then in water to take off the muriatic acid—it might run to \$30 an acre. The Company has just installed a spray system at Sevilla that has set them back \$180,000, but whose 300 miles of pipe will make it possible to treat 2,800 trees a day. The blue mixture is harmless for people, unless, like the sigatoka spores, they take it internally, and as a matter of fact it does not even kill the spores, since to do so would mean killing the leaves too.

"We don't murder the little beggars," said the young man who looks after the spray system, "we just give them an opportunity to commit suicide. They digest some Bordeaux with the rest of their meals, releasing the copper, and die of the effects."

You may have thought sometimes how wonderful it would be to pluck a luscious ripe banana from the tree and eat it on the spot? Well, it wouldn't. Tree-ripened bananas are only good

for cattle, who love them in any stage of development; to be at its best, the fruit must be cut green. How green, depends on the distance it has to travel; stems for Norway, for instance, are taken earlier than those for New Orleans. On arrival, they can be brought to the right degree of golden perfection in special ripening rooms. The savorlessness of most of the handsome-looking fruits we buy in city stores is invariably excused by the dealers on the grounds of premature gathering; long and painful experience has planted in me the suspicion that there is a Grocers' Chorus, which must run something like this:

An orange, a melon, a tangerine
 They all are picked when they are green.
 If fruit don't taste the way it oughter,
 It isn't us you oughter slaughter—

or words to that effect. That alibi doesn't work with a banana.

The advantages to the shipper are obvious. But there are plenty of other headaches to make up for it. Bananas are delicate, easily wounded creatures, that must be sheltered and pampered from tree to table. They are handled with the delicacy accorded to old Ming vases: cushioned from the hot and possibly bony shoulders of the porters, carried to the washing vats in carts heavily upholstered with straw pads, stacked in cars deep-lined with leaves with more care than a debutante packing her organdie dress for the prom. The stems are cut in the early morning; by sunset they are alongside the dock in Santa Marta, and the wharf comes to life.

The car doors are opened and the checker takes his seat in a high chair near by. The grinning, slouching Negro stevedores form their lines, the conveyors start to move between wharf and ship—continuous belts of canvas cradles, into each of which a stem is laid with the tenderness usually reserved for newborn children. In the refrigerated holds skilled workers, who get 50 per cent more pay than dock laborers, stand the stems in bins so that no chance storm can damage them. Boats time their arrival to catch the market, which in New York is on Thursday morning, and woe if bad weather delay them. A real cream-of-pea fog can mean the loss of fifty or sixty thousand dollars.

Lynx-eyed inspectors watch the loading and throw out any stems that are defective or below par, to be given later to hospitals and the poor. There are a lot of people in Santa Marta whose domestic economy is based on rejected bananas, but even their capacity must sometimes feel a slight strain. The discards can run as high as 20 per cent of the whole, and in one record week (March 1940) more than half a million stems were cut. Dock hands are paid according to their job: a basic rate for carriers, 25 per cent more for conveyor men, and 50 per cent more for hold workers. In the boom days these sassy, competent Negroes made \$125 to \$150 a week, which to a laborer in the United States would represent about \$400 or \$500. They used to light cigarettes with \$5 bills.

The good old hectic days are gone, and five pesos is now something to consider with proper respect. The last ten years have not been all roses; labor troubles, depression, a period of strained relations with the Government coincided; prices have sunk to little more than half those of 1929; production costs have increased, boosted by sigatoka, among other things; the war, after the first six months, has resulted in an almost complete choke-off of European trade. Like the Negro who had most of the ills to which aged flesh is heir but who praised the Lawd he hadn't got boils, the Santa Marta division must give thanks for relief from Panama disease.

The Prado in Sevilla is a smaller, less lush copy of that in Santa Marta: bungalows with wide screened porches half buried in waves of bougainvillia and *roja*; giant ceibas—not the kind whose huge pale-gray trunks rise bare and smooth a hundred feet, like those of the Catatumbo, but the lovely, spreading, leafy ones that can shade a whole plaza; hedges of gardenias; and (I am no botanist) a bloom like miniature pink wisteria that I remember as a garden stand-by in India. In Santa Marta there are tall palms swaying in the roaring trades, those month-long gales which rip through the houses upsetting ornaments, snatching at curtains, and driving housewives to distraction. Sevilla is sheltered from the wind, but it pays for peace with greater heat, and the *jeñenes* can satisfy their appetites undisturbed on such newcomers as chance may offer, reducing the

unfortunate chapetón in two days to the general appearance of a damp polka-dot print.

It is a little difficult to convey the atmosphere that makes the Prados such very pleasant places. It has to do with unstinted kindness, and a notable absence of mental reservations, and other comforting things better felt than expressed; very definitely it has to do with women. Wives of men whose work lies in places where there are no outside resources and no shopping districts, where climate is obtrusive, and home leave comes every three years, and where children must be sent away just when it is hardest to see them go, are divided into two great categories: washouts and salts-of-the-earth. Washouts have many subdivisions, which it would be futile to explore. S.-of-the-E. are above rubies; their houses are homes, their husbands' casual smack expresses volumes of inarticulate appreciation, and in faraway, Olympian offices executives rise up and call them blessed. They can be found in mining camps and oil camps, at 14,000 feet in the Andes, or in the less familiar parts of Patagonia (here's looking at you, Mrs. Ike), and they are Nice People.

Sevilla is not, of course, Patagonia—but neither is it a cozy town at home where parents can watch their sons and daughters grow up, and where “there are things to do.” There are things to do in one sense—making homes and looking after husbands and having babies, for instance, and for odd moments, a casual kind of golf, and riding, and ancient movies twice a week, and a little quiet gold-washing up the creek. But I have tried the description on half a dozen girls of my acquaintance and they answered, “But what is there to *do*?” Division wives, bless them, run on direct current, and their your-joys-are-my-joys-your-sorrows-my-sorrows comradeliness thumbs its nose at the stories (not, it must be admitted, always fictional) of back-biting porch sessions and female gumming-up of male works. Perhaps Mr. Zemurray, about whose presidential head there is a fine, full-color aura of anecdote and in whose style there appears to be very little of the unapproachable mogul in a plush-lined ivory tower, should insert a vote of thanks for wives in the annual report.

The United Fruit Company is unquestionably one of those

giant corporations that make would-be trust busters toss uneasily on their ascetic cots of nights. This is not the place, and I am certainly not the person, to take the economic system to bits and rebuild it nearer to the heart's desire. The fact remains, however, that in undeveloped regions where an efficient, ramified and specialized industrial organization has not yet been evolved, it is next to impossible for small enterprises to build up this kind of commerce. And as has been remarked before, big business breaks up into individuals: individual shareholders, individual employees, individual laborers and individual producers. It is extremely hard, sitting carefully in line with a fan in a Sevilla bungalow, to think of soulless corporations. One can only think about friendly, hard-working, competent people doing their jobs, and doing them, God be praised, in contentment.

CHAPTER XXVII

Grass Huts in the Sierra

SOMETIMES when dinner parties are very partyish or cocktail parties very cocktailish, a keen observer might see a glassy look come into my eye and note a fixed expression of absent amiability clamp itself over my face. This is not due to liquor but to what practically anyone nowadays calls escapism. I am no longer standing propped against a doorway trying to balance a glass, a sandwich that threatens to expel a gob of mayonnaise, and a cigarette, while a thousand decibels batter my eardrums. I am riding a mountaineering mule down a headlong trail in the Sierra de Santa Marta, and the only sound is a long-drawn "Aaah, muláaaa!" from the arriero. It is very hot; the panorama is lost in haze and only the forested heights of the Cerro Maroma stand clear beyond the immediate scenery. Since the mule does everything according to its own experienced technique—a jump, a slither, a little jolting run, a few cautious steps, a pause to study the terrain and repeat as before—I have freedom to think. I think about de Lerma, riding by the way I have come, and of the white cannibals "whose women, lacking weapons, threw the little children they held on their breasts at the enemy," and about the dream city that never was found, and about the Valley of Tairona that might lie just beyond the next range or under me as I ride, and how odd it is that the fruit of the giant Sierra palms should be used in making gas masks for a mad and distant world. I speculate about the shy Arhuaco Indians, the object of my trip, and how they ever found out that lime was good with coca leaves and that ground-up *chipa-chipas*, the little shellfish of Pueblo Viejo, make the

best lime. And, for that matter, how they ever discovered that those uninteresting leaves made a pleasant drug when toasted and chewed. I wonder what the storytellers recount all night long in the *cansamaria*, the house where no woman may set foot, and to what hidden valley Arhuacos go when they disappear without a trace from their secluded village. The hours in saddle are short when there is so much to think about.

The Arhuacos are not the muscular savages of popular fancy, armed with spears and clad in a few inadequate feathers (though Colombia can produce these too if you care to look for them). Whatever they were like when they roamed the plains of the Orinoco, before more powerful peoples began pushing them westward, they are now an undersized, weedy lot, with something of the shy, curious, evasive air of imperfectly domesticated animals. Long isolation, intermarriage and coca-chewing are gradually reducing their number—or it may be just another example of the queer effect the domination of superior cultures has on primitive peoples. The proximity of our much vaunted civilization usually results in the more or less rapid decline of aborigines who got on very nicely before they were exposed to its blessings.

There are several tribes of Arhuacos, but it has been estimated that all told they do not number much more than fifteen hundred souls. Those of San Andrés, a tiny village in the middle heights of the northwestern Sierra, have successfully withstood all well-meant efforts to influence their ways, language, habits and religious beliefs. They are not in the least unfriendly; they merely exercise passive resistance—so much more efficacious than active opposition—and as the housemaid said, keep themselves *to* themselves. Which, perhaps illogically, is why I wanted to visit them.

If the trip is planned ahead, it is easy to reach the Sierra from Barranquilla in a day, during which one uses every means of travel except a boat and a dirigible. One starts in a plane, and moves backward, as it were, through automobile and train to mule, and en route, between the Hotel del Prado and the Cerro Maroma, one sees a remarkably complete sample line of Colombiana.

First there is the flight along the beach, with the sea breaking

in long white crescents on one side and a dark-green-and-silver design of marsh and jungle and inland water on the other. With luck, one may see the shining line of snow peaks, floating improbably halfway up the sky, their bases lost in pale haze. Having thus given you a picture of the coastal selvas and the Caribbean, and a glimpse of 18,770-foot mountains, the hydroplane deposits you at Pueblo Viejo, a typical fishing village set on a strip of sand between the sea and the Ciénaga. The general impression here is a huddle of pink and cream and brownish-gray, mixed with the conscious grace of palms; there are church towers that reflect in the lagoon and in the foreground some drying nets and a few dugouts. All the rest is an immensity of still blue.

Ciénaga means lagoon, and this is *the* lagoon, open to the sea at the north, receiving a branch of the Magdalena at the southern end, and connected with Barranquilla by a long caño. Somewhere in its shallow expanse are the aquatic villages of Morro and Aracataca Viejo, built entirely on piles without even a bump of dry land to help them along. Their 2,000 inhabitants live by fishing, carrying the catch nine hours by canoe to Barranquilla, where they deliver it, believe it or not, on ice. After unloading the fish, they refill their canoes with ice and start back. Drinking water must be fetched from sources many hours away, cooking is done on the platforms outside the huts; walking is impossible, for there is nowhere to walk. Air pictures of the villages look exactly like those of the flooded regions of the Ohio—a collection of cubes floating in a vast sheet of water.

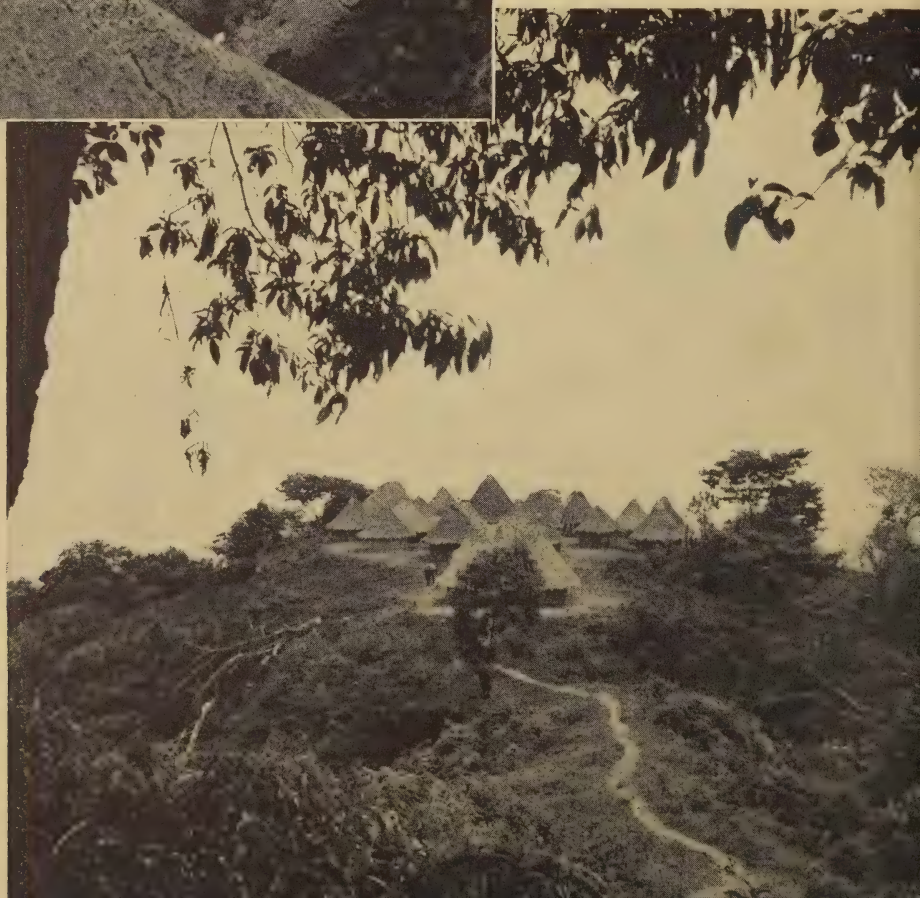
A short drive along the beach from Pueblo Viejo is the town of Ciénaga, or more properly San Juan de Ciénaga. Here one meets the banana railway that runs from Santa Marta to Fundación. Whether one also meets the train depends on luck and the day of the week. For esoteric reasons the morning planes leave Barranquilla at a different time each day; since the railway schedule does not follow these vagaries, Monday's connection must be made in ten minutes flat. With this in view I had ordered a taxi to meet the plane, but when I arrived, there was only one car standing beside the shed at the end of the jetty, and that was filled and running over with a confused mass of newsboys and newspapers. Putting on my most winning



ANDEAN HIGHWAY

INDIAN VILLAGE IN THE SIERRA NEVADA

San Andrés, "thirty little round straw huts shining pale gold in the sun . . ."



smile, I persuaded them to add me to the load, and thus, in an inextricable mixture of *La Prensa*, saddlebags, *mochilas* and assorted young men, we careened along the sandy track, rocking and swaying, missing an aldermanic pelican by inches, but afraid to slow down lest the car be marooned. Halfway down the beach we exchanged waves with my missing taxi, stuck fast in an extra-soft bit of dune. Our chauffeur had entered into the spirit of the thing; through the so-called streets of Ciénaga the car leaped from bump to bump like a young ram, drawing up with squealing brakes alongside the train with a second and a half to spare.

This was doubly fortunate, for Ciénaga is not a place in which one feels impelled to linger. Built on sand a few inches above high water, the wide unpaved roads are treeless and forlorn, the houses depressing, the general air one of negligence. There is a predominance of Negro blood, and a fair amount of blotchy carate. According to my friend Juan, a moral youth, the limited pleasures of Ciénaga are largely polygamous; "There are many bad towns in Colombia," he says austerely, "but Ciénaga is the worst."

By contrast, Río Frío, farther up the line, with its enormous ceiba trees and surrounding plantations, is quite inviting. When I last went through, at the end of March, preparations were under way for the annual fiesta of San Isidro. St. Isidore's special function is to bring rain (his day comes at the end of the dry season) and he is expected to produce at least a shower before the observances are over. The faithful allow him every chance, carrying him on their shoulders in procession, two steps forward and one step back—a hiccupping gait devised to give him plenty of time. The procession starts out chanting praises; as it goes round and round, a reproachful note creeps in, developing into objurgation and remonstrance. If the skies remain unmoved, this becomes good hearty abuse, laced with variegated profanity, and the saint is returned with scant ceremony to his niche until the next year.

The village of the Arhuacos, San Andrés, can be reached from either Río Frío or Orihueca. My mules and guide were waiting at the latter station. We set off in shimmering heat through the banana farms, which dwindled into stunted desolation as we

got farther from the well-irrigated sections; after three quarters of an hour or so the trail began to climb. Five hours later we scrambled up the last steep rise to the finca where we were to lodge. This was the farm of Señor Fuentes, a gentleman of faraway Tolima who many years ago, finding himself with thirteen children and no resources, decided to pioneer. On the back of a ridge running up to the Cerro he came on a prehistoric site, a rectangle paved with flat stone slabs, and there he built his house. He cleared and burned the forest, planted cane and coffee, barley, oranges, limes, pineapples and papaya, and fenced a little garden for the flowers without which Colombians will not live.

We talked about those early days, sitting on the front stoop in the quick dusk while Señor Fuentes stripped kapok pods of their wool, and farther on the hired man pounded coffee in a mortar hollowed from the upright trunk of a tree, and the pretty Fuentes daughter busied herself in the little shed that is the kitchen. My host had a pitying contempt for the precautious souls who hang on to a pinching anxious existence rather than venture into new frontiers. As a matter of fact, sitting surrounded by the quiet beauty of the mountains and the bounty he had drawn from the earth, he was compassionate and rather superior to all men less fortunate. He spoke of a friend of the past.

"He was a wonderful mechanic," he said, "he could do anything with machinery. But he thought of nothing else. He never saw anything but the pieces of metal under his hand. He was a machine himself—a machine with the extension of speech."

Words behave for Señor Fuentes as they do for all Colombians.

"Look," he said, waving a kapok pod in the direction of the dark mass of the Maroma and a rising moon, "I have that all the time. I haven't any money, but I have grain and coffee and panela, and milk and meat, and fruit for the picking, and my children grew up strong and have done well in the world, and I am free."

I thought, all this and heaven too, wooed to an idyllic mood where even the pervasive odor of pig from the adjacent sty seemed just a pleasant grace note in a bucolic symphony.

The house consists of three rooms in a row: a *sala* and two

bedrooms. The large number of beds in the room allotted to me seemed to indicate a sociable night, but some tactful maneuvering arranged matters. "We will put two beds in the sala," said the daughter, "and we women will sleep in here."

I had been warned that up here it would be cold, and came duly prepared, but actually not even the three-quarter walls or the deep straw of the high-pitched roof were enough to lower the temperature. The bed was very wide and very hard, however, and there were blessedly few insects, thanks to the dry weather and also, no doubt, to the colony of bats that lived under the ridgepole and the rats that walked the beams with the assurance of high-wire artists; so sleep was sound.

Sitting next evening under the eaves over thick cocoa and cheese, with a gasoline lamp turning the good-looking faces of the younger Fuentes into a bold pattern of highlights and shadows, they asked me about New York. Was it true that everyone in America had an automobile and that even laborers had houses with baths and electric lights, and that trains went under the ground and everyone was rich?

"How much does it cost to go there in an airplane?" asked Juan.

"To go and come back?"

"Yes, of course to come back. This is my home."

And when I told him: "Caray! Nothing is worth that much."

His sister was not entirely agreed. As she sat on her bed watching with bright attentive eyes every move of my brief preparations for the night, she had a hundred soft-voiced but searching questions. How she longed to get away from the farm and the brooding mountains and the monotony! But how? I suggested a peripatetic husband. She shook her pretty head.

"That kind is hard to find," she said sadly. Her expression changed and she gave a little chuckle. "Even J—— B——, who owns the finca where you stopped for water—he is a man of means and has seven wives, but he doesn't take them traveling. He keeps them in different places so they are waiting for him when he gets there."

"Seven?"

"Oh, all the men around here who can afford it have several wives," she replied with a hint of inherited, Tolima superiority.

"It depends how well off they are. B—— is rich, but if he had more money he would have more wives."

It is only three hours' ride from the Fuentes finca to the Arhuaco village of San Andrés. So the fact that I overslept and had to be shaken up at six was not serious. Morning ritual is reduced to simple terms on these occasions. The stream that fed the bathshed in the garden was dry, but I doubt if I could have faced extensive public ablutions in any case. I have bathed in some remarkably exposed tubs in Japan, but never actually *coram populo*. So now I limited washing to a few symbolic gestures with the small basin and lonely towel that served family, guests and hired hands, careful not to take more than a finger of the water in the two-quart can that had been carried from a distant brook. Fortified by black coffee from the hillside bushes and pineapples such as the gods might envy from the back garden, we set off.

The trail is very steep and narrow up to the *cuchilla*, the knife ridge of the Maroma, but the greater part is through cool forests where the sun never reaches. There are small pink ground orchids like begonias, and giant ones in shafts on the trees, exciting in bud and disappointingly drab in flower. There are formal scarlet flowers like the claw of a giant lobster, and something that looks like red honeysuckle. Dry-seeming lianas hang down in brown streaks, and big-leaved creepers fling themselves from branch to branch fifty feet in air. It would be nice to do a pretty piece here about the chattering monkeys, the brilliant toucans and lumpish sloths, the boa constrictors and slinking jaguars, and all the strange and colorful wild life of the tropical forest, but unfortunately it was not there. We did not see a single bird or animal, with the exception of the snake that bit my mule—fatally, as it turned out.

Twenty minutes or so from San Andrés there is a lich gate, on which is painted in bad Spanish a warning to trespassers. Beyond it the path climbs and dips, and suddenly leaves the forest to run onto the cleared spur that holds the village. Thirty little round straw huts built on a clearing like the prow of a ship, they shine pale gold in the sun, guarding the vanishing tradition of a race that is on the way to extinction.

The Arhuacos, or at any rate these Arhuacos, are a de-

generate, meager people, averaging less than five feet in height. Since the men are beardless, wear their hair long, and dress like the women in homespun smocks, it is difficult for the inexperienced eye to distinguish which is which. Divided between apathy and diffidence, no Department of State official could be more noncommittal; their stock answer to any question is "no sé"—"I don't know." Perhaps if one could speak to them in their own language, they would be more communicative, but no one knows the Kogi (their tribe name) dialect, and except for the headman they know no Spanish.

No one has attempted to translate their legends, though Preuss and Bolinder devoted some study to language types. Yet on Saturday nights in the cansamaria, when the men of the tribe are gathered together for a clubby, sleepless session, all the myths and glories of the tribe must be unrolled. Perhaps the stories tell of the time when the Arhuacos were fierce and strong, and lived beyond the mountains in the Goajira, at the last eastern point of the peninsula. Perhaps they speak of the cave of Jarara, where none dare enter any more. Handed down through countless generations, there may unfold in the smoky, crowded hut the tale of how the Caribes, the tiger-people, drove the Arhuacos west beyond Maracaibo.

The Goajiros still tell of the hegira of the Arhuacos "in the time when there were no Spaniards." "There was not enough room for them, and because of this and of the many summers, they went away. They were friends of the Goajiros; they were stronger and knew more; they had more poisons, and their very saliva was poison because they chewed coca with lime which they carried in their *poporos*. They had more jewels and knew more incantations." Another version is less benevolent. According to this, the Arhuacos were displeasing to Mareigua, the one God. Brothers mated with sisters, and mothers with sons, daughters had children by their own fathers. So Mareigua separated the Sierra Nevada from the Goajira, and the Goajiros chased the erring Arhuacos out of the peninsula into the high mountains.

The San Andrés Arhuacos use no money. Their total concept of currency values seems to be expressed in the term "un peso"—said as a single clipped word. Even this is a purely abstract

notion, without acquisitive stimulus. Once, meeting a stray tribesman on a Sierra trail, I bargained for his poporo, the hollowed gourd part-filled with lime that every Arhuaco carries through each waking hour. Reluctant to sell, the Indian stood mute and bashful in the narrow way, dwarfed by somber forest that shut out the sky; his long hair fell dankly to his shoulders, and his tiny, bony fingers clutched the poporo to the folds of his homespun gown. He could not count the meaningless coins I put into his hand, nor did he find them interesting; what won for me the lime gourd was some packs of cigarettes, irresistible not for the tobacco, but for the lovely cellophane wrapping. Thus visitors to the village take only gifts in kind: salt and chipa-chipas and beads and rum—though this last and much appreciated offering is not always wise.

The Arhuacos cultivate corn and yuca and cane, and keep some cattle and pigs, but their houses are almost as bare of utensils as they are of furniture. One or two pots, a crude loom, a machete and perhaps an axe, a hammock and a few of the knotted fiber bags called mochilas are about the extent of their belongings, apart from their nightgownlike clothes. Some of the women wear necklaces of cornelian and agate and other polished stones, like the ones Fuentes found buried under a slab of his floor. The fields looked well kept, but the Indian habit of burning off the forest each year to plant fresh land threatens to play havoc with the watershed.

The Arhuacos still practice an annual spring disappearance, which has given rise to intriguing speculation on possible religious rites in some remote spot known only to themselves. There is no direct evidence to support these romantic theories, though they are perfectly possible; in any case, whether they vanish to visit friends, plant crops or worship pagan gods, the inhabitants of San Andrés undoubtedly melt into thin air once a year. My visit coincided with this exodus. The little round huts were shut and empty; the fields stood deserted. Only the cansamaria was open, and so I, a woman, was able to enter the sacred house.

Built like the others of woven straw mats, with a high conical roof of pale palm thatch, the cansamaria differs from them chiefly in size and in the distinction of two doors instead of one.

Set symmetrically on the earthen floor were the charred remains of four fires, and since the diameter of the house is not above twenty feet, the temperature must be around boiling point when, in hammocks and on the smoothed logs and wooden blocks that serve as seats, the whole male population is gathered for a wakeful night. Beyond these seats, the entire furnishings consisted of a drum made of deerskin laced over a hollow trunk and an odd maraca forgotten in the dust—unless the wooden gratings built about eight feet above the floor (for sleeping or storage?) can be counted as furniture. The cone of roof and the upper walls are black with soot; curiously enough it is not a dull black but as shiny as new varnish.

Arhuaco husbands never enter their wives' huts. Food is placed outside for them, and conjugal meetings are held elsewhere in obedience to some ancient and inconvenient law. It is said that these encounters must take place in the open and by day, for happy children cannot be conceived in darkness—a pretty thought, if awkward.

The spindling descendants of a once proud race will not last very much longer. Modernity is coming too close, and the characteristic of our civilization is that it says inexorably: Conform or be crushed. The Arhuacos will not conform, and progress will not let them live. There will be roads into the high valleys, and villages and schools and churches and the law. The little men and women will gather their few belongings and move farther away, and there will be no more San Andrés huddled pale gold in the sunshine, and eventually there will be no more Arhuacos, but just the memory of a useless and inoffensive people who one time had jewels and poisons and prayers beyond their neighbors.

CHAPTER XXVIII

Pearl of the Indies

CARTAGENA has had many names: Pearl of the Indies, Guardian of the Sea, the Heroic City. I like best a phrase in that *Mirroure or Looking Glass for both Saints and Sinners* which the Reverend Samuel Clark compiled with pious inaccuracy and published in 1671. The Reverend Clark, who seems to have included any material that came to hand in a spirit of impartial eclecticism, has a fascinating unreliability in North American geography. "Florida," he remarks, "hath on the East, the Northern Sea: on the West, Mexico: on the North, New-France: And on the South, Virginia. . . . Emeralds are found there, and Turquesses, and Pearls. . . ." He lumps New England cheerfully with Nicaragua as part of America Mexicana. His description of "Brazile" is inextricably mixed with "Meer-Men and Meer-Women," whose well-intentioned but unfortunate habits he explains with simple faith. But when he comes to New Granada and Perú, his feet are on solid ground. And of Cartagena he says:

"Carthagena is now a fair and gallant City."

There is nothing in the New World like this battlemented port between the Magdalena and the Isthmus. For two hundred years Spanish engineers, backed by Spanish gold, studied to make it impregnable. Patiently, carefully, they constructed ramparts, bastions, towers, forts whose subterranean galleries would have delighted a Maginot; the walls alone, forty feet high and fifty to sixty thick, cost the then fantastic sum of \$59,000,000. Town and citadel, it is unique.

Because the contemptuous valor of the Conquistadores

prompted them to establish settlements in hostile country without bothering to fortify them, cities like Bogotá and Cali and Popayán had no walls or castles. Neither were they given any other form of grandiose construction; the minds of the sixteenth-century adventurers were fixed on gold, not architecture. They neither preserved nor imitated the temples and palaces that Mayans, Aztecs and Incas, builders in the grand manner, had constructed by who knows what miracles of vision and extremes of cruelty. Indeed, the whole impatient Conquest, for all its wild and pitiless romance, had an oddly businesslike quality, because the Spanish, even at their most picaresque, are an extremely practical people. Later, the Indians were all either dead or pacified—the terms were often synonymous—and there was no need for ramparts or towers; later, too, there were small means for grandiosity.

The works of Cartagena were an exception, but only in form; in intent they were eminently utilitarian. Those great bastions with their feet in the sea, those terraced fortresses golden-gray and silent in the sun, were not the result of vainglory but of necessity. Every pirate that scoured the seas—and they were legion—had his eyes fixed on the Pearl of the Indies; any smiling morning might see the lean ships beating over the horizon to bombard the town.

For nearly two hundred and forty years there were only three trading ports in the whole of Spanish America, from California to Cape Horn, and even those were open to none but authorized Spanish vessels. One of them—the only one on the South American mainland—was Cartagena; the others were Portobelo, on the Isthmus, and Vera Cruz. The mother country maintained a monopoly of trade, forbidding intercolonial commerce, and because the Spanish Main—and the Atlantic too, for that matter—was no place for a lonely caravel with silver in the hold, there was just one heavily convoyed shipment a year from each port. This was the plate fleet—so called because the best part of its home-bound cargo was silver, *plata*, from the far-off mines of Potosí and Puna—a symbol of the power of Spain and the covetousness of her neighbors.

Thus for a whole year the goods accumulated: gold and emeralds and pearls, silver and painted cottons, cinnamon and

cacao, balsam and dyewood. When the crowding sails of the fleet were sighted on the horizon, there was feverish excitement in Cartagena. Were they the galleons bringing *las cosas de España*, or the ships of some marauding gentleman of the high seas? The guard was mustered and guns were readied, for defense or for a salute that would signal the beginning of a brief season of trafficking and gaiety. And when the galleons were in port, what bustle, what routs and parties, what trying on of new furbelows—"the very latest thing in Madrid, my dear—the Queen herself has one"—what aching ears for news of home and the latest political gossip! The frequent little nips of brandy doubtless became more frequent. Ulloa, there in 1735, says the first glass was taken at eleven in the morning, and was called "hacer las once"; he adds that the Creoles went on "making elevenses" all day. There must have been some heavy hearts beneath those elegant new bodices when the Fair was over and anchors weighed, and the time came to watch the high painted sterns dwindle into nothing and the curved sails lose themselves between blue sky and blue sea.

The plate fleets defied the corsairs with almost consistent success, but Cartagena itself was not so lucky. In 1543, when it was scarcely ten years founded, it was sacked by Robert Baal, or Val; three years later Martin Côte, together with a pirate splendidly known as don Juan, pillaged and slaughtered. They lost three hundred men in the process, however, in part because the colonists had taken a hint from the Indians and had sown the beach with poisoned arrows. The next three attacks were driven off: one more by Côte, and two by John "Acle" (Hawkins). On Hawkins' second trip, Francis Drake, then a young fellow of twenty-three, commanded the little fifty-ton ship *Judith*—the only vessel besides Hawkins' own to escape when the plate fleet caught them at Vera Cruz. The colonists had reason to regret that the defeat had not been conclusive, for in 1586 Drake came back, this time with twenty ships and 1,300 men, and succeeded in forcing the harbor entrance, putting the city to the sack. He stayed in Cartagena for the better part of two months, seizing \$400,000 in gold and jewels, all the bronze cannon, and—nothing if not thorough—even the church bells. He then set fire to the town and demanded a ransom of \$900,000.

How much Drake actually got, after prolonged chaffering, is a matter on which there seem to be as many opinions as there are historians; one authority says it was 110,000 ducats, "equal in purchasing power to nearly \$3,000,000"; others put it at a figure nearer \$100,000.

We are prone to think of pirates, semi-official or otherwise, as ranging the seas alone, a Jolly Roger at the masthead and a cutlass between the teeth. Most of them, however, organized their banditry on a solid commercial basis, and many lived in Jamaica and Santo Domingo as landed gentry between expeditions. (Henry Morgan, most brutal of pirates, was knighted and thrice appointed governor of Jamaica.) When the corsair Jean Baptiste Desjeans, Baron de Pointis, came against Cartagena in 1697, there was nothing of the lone sea wolf about him; he had twenty-two well-found vessels and a force of over five thousand men. One is forced to believe that the Spanish were slow to learn; on this occasion the defending force consisted of five soldiers and sixty-eight Negro and mulatto recruits, holding the fort of Bocachica under the command of don Sancho Jimeno. For a whole week they withstood the attack. On the eighth day the French ran their ships close inshore and stormed the walls, but only at evening would don Sancho consent to speak to them. He stood on the battlements, pale but erect, raising his sword in a duelist's salute, and his voice came clear in the sudden hush:

"Sir: I have still some men who know how to defend their trust with honor."

There was no ammunition, however, no food, no one of the valid soldiers left. Some of the recruits opened the gate, and the besiegers took possession. Don Sancho stood firm, magnificent and unreasonable.

"I neither surrender nor ask quarter!" he shouted. "It is not I who have yielded the fort, but the poltroons who had not the courage to die in its defense."

Bowing, the pirate-baron unloosed his own sword and presented it to Jimeno with a flourish, "a homage of French chivalry to Spanish valor." At least, that is how the history books describe it. Don Sancho's account is less romantic, but more effective: "He unhooked his sword from his belt and

wanted to put it on me, and when I refused (because, as I told him, it was no use to me then), he insisted so that I was obliged to take it. This sword had created such a sensation that the whole country thought it was worth a city; I hold it as a keepsake given me by a general of the fleet, because at most it is worth a doubloon, being made of copper."

The chivalry of the raiders, whose force outnumbered the defenders by about forty-seven to one, did not prevent them from stripping the city of everything of value, to the tune of \$10,000,000, according to Henao and Arrubla. These historians say that two years before, another buccaneer named Ducasse had sacked Cartagena, getting away with everything worth taking, including the silver Easter sepulcher from the monastery of St. Augustine; most authorities, however, combine these two French raids into one double-header. Louis XIV later returned the sepulcher, with the addition of a symbolic silver palm leaf; both, alas, went into the furnace during the terrible siege of 1815.

Cartagena made one or two sorties of her own. In 1620 she defeated the corsairs and captured their fleet; in 1700 Governor Pimienta took a force to the coast of Darién and drove the Scotch from Fort St. Andrew. The "Company of Scotland," with true Scots' obstinacy, had attempted a colony on the Isthmus in defiance of the Spanish proprietors, the English Crown, the East India Company, the Dutch traders and the irritated French. Its moving spirit was the Reverend William Paterson (the somewhat unlikely founder of the Bank of England), a man of parts who had been pally with the buccaneers in Jamaica; he and his backers—and, of course, the settlers—seem to have been the only mourners when Pimienta put an end to New Caledonia and New Edinburgh, the thirty straw huts built on the site of Acla, where Pedrarias killed Balboa. Cartagena also managed to ward off two rather half-hearted English attacks, one by Admiral Rosier and one by Vernon.

By 1741 the tremendous fortifications were almost complete, and proved that they were well worth whatever they had cost—a sum that modern students put nearer five hundred million pesos than the seventy-five million estimated by earlier writers. In that year Cartagena, with a garrison of 1,100 men and

several companies of militia, withstood the most formidable assault of its history. The British Admiral Sir Edward Vernon came against the "fair and gallant City" with 51 ships of the line, 135 transports, 2,070 cannon and more than 28,000 men. It was a fleet greater than the Invincible Armada, and no more fortunate. When, after fifty-six days of fighting and disease, the English turned and made sail for Jamaica, they left behind nearly 18,000 dead. Vernon's force included 2,763 North American colonists, among them George Washington's half brother Lawrence; Captain Washington escaped and survived to name the estate on the Potomac in honor of his former commander.

Hero of the defense was don Blas de Leso. He was hardly more than a half portion of a man, for he was one eyed, one armed and one legged. The missing pieces of his anatomy had been left on various European battlefields. When complete, don Blas must have been a terror; even in his depleted state he was said to be worth ten expert generals. If he was the man I think he was, he carried in his pocket afterwards one of the medals that the English had coined beforehand, some examples of which can be seen today in the museums of Cartagena and Bogotá. They bear the likeness of the doughty commandant, shown kneeling and surrendering his sword, and the inscription: "Spanish pride pulled down by Admiral Vernon."

Danger was never very far away in old Cartagena. Death was too common, and frequently too wholesale, for pomp and circumstance—indeed, it was sometimes too much so for identification. Many a colonist—no one will ever know how many—gentle or simple, vanished without a trace. In siege and pestilence there was no time for careful interment, even when there were people left to care for the dead; in earlier days, a soldier struck by a poisoned arrow was left where he fell. Sebastián de Belalcázar himself was buried who knows where; another great discoverer, the first to lay eyes on the coast where Cartagena now lies and first to land on its shores, had no grave but the forest. This was Juan de la Cosa, one of the greatest navigators who ever lived.

If there is one fact about exploration that has been demonstrated through the ages, it is that publicity pays. Cosa, whose merits were such that Queen Isabella wrote: "I would be best

served if the said Juan de la Cosa carried out this voyage . . . because I believe that he will know how to do it better than anyone else," never quite made the front page of history. He deserved to, but he was destined always to be overshadowed by someone more spectacular, and—*rara avis* in those pushing times—he does not seem to have cared. The truth is that Cosa was a cosmographer and pilot, not a *condottiere*.

Juan de la Cosa made six voyages of discovery. He sailed with Columbus on the first venture into the unknown in 1492—indeed, he was the owner of the Santa María—and accompanied the "Admiral of the Ocean Sea" on his second three-year voyage from 1493 to 1496. In 1499, with Alonso de Ojeda, another of the Admiral's men, he explored the coast of Venezuela, when a scholarly middle-aged Italian businessman, one Amerigo Vespucci, was one of the party. In 1500 he piloted Bastidas in the discovery of the coast from Cabo de la Vela to Darién; in 1504 he went on his own hook to Venezuela, Cartagena (or rather, the bay where Cartagena was later founded) and Urabá; and in 1509, once more with Ojeda, he undertook the expedition that cost him his life. Cosa thought up this last enterprise himself; he persuaded Ojeda, then kicking his heels in Santo Domingo with other out-of-work adventurers, to apply for an appointment as governor of the coast, pushed the business end through in Madrid, chartered, outfitted and manned six vessels at his own expense, and, of course, did the navigating. Yet it is known as Ojeda's voyage.

Alonso de Ojeda was a man to overshadow any conscientious master-mariner. He was the very stuff of romance: "Of beautiful countenance . . . all bodily perfections that a man may have seemed joined in him, except that he was small"—so runs Las Casas' description—"one of the most venturesome of men, and thus, in Castille as later here, constantly involved in brawls and duels . . . in which he was always the first to draw blood." Ojeda satisfied all the requirements of fiction, for "never once in all his life did any man draw blood from him, until about two years before his death, when he was ambushed by four Indians." His luck held good in the attack on the fierce Turbacos of the Cartagenan backlands: Cosa, who had opposed the attempt, was killed by a poisoned arrow; Ojeda escaped un-

scathed to found a short-lived colony at Urabá, which he entrusted to an able, if ignorant, subaltern, Francisco Pizarro.

In 1533 don Pedro de Heredia, a swashbuckling, broken-nosed, competent man who knew his Indies and who had a way with him, secured a Crown contract to colonize between the Magdalena and Darién. There was no nonsense about Heredia; he wasted none of his money for the paraphernalia of rank on which governors like Pedrarias and de Lerma had absurdly insisted, but invested it in an abundance of arms and ammunition, tools, cheap trade goods, and certain horn armor he had worked out from experience of poisoned arrows in the Santa Marta region. In the spring of 1533 he dropped anchor in Cartagena Bay, and shortly after founded the settlement that became the Pearl of the Indies. The Indians, rather surprisingly, were almost demonstratively friendly, after one initial skirmish; even more surprisingly, they allowed the Spaniards to make a peaceful trip into the interior that netted gold to the value of one and a half million ducats. Henao and Arrubla point out that this one jaunt yielded more to each soldier (6,000 ducats) than all the fantastic loot of Mexico or Perú.

Heredia appears to have chosen his men with the same care as his equipment. Two were particularly outstanding: Cesar, who had sailed with the Venetian Sebastian Cabot, and who later carried out daring and successful explorations to the south, and the immortal Cieza de León. Cieza rather admired the Indians of the coast, "clever, cleanlimb'd men, and their wives some of the handsomest and most lovely I have seen. Their diet is cleanly, and they follow not the filthy customs of other nations; they have little towns, and their houses are like long Arbors." The women dressed in two-piece cotton costumes; the men contented themselves with a heavy gold shell worn where it would do most good, and carried bows and poisoned arrows.

This arrow poison was a specialty of which the natives were justly proud. Cieza was at some pains to learn how it was made; if anyone has been looking for a good poison recipe, here it is: Take some manzanillo roots, giant ants, spiders, a hairy worm (the like of which once bit our author in the neck, "and that was the most painful night I ever felt in all my life"); to these

add the wings of a bat, the head and tail of a venomous fish, toads, tails of snakes, herbs, roots, and some poisonous manzanillo apples. Cook till well blended in an open space a good safe distance from town. The Indians used to select as poison-cook "some slave or woman of small value," who usually died of the emanations.

The manzanillo, well and unfavorably known in the Cauca as *jaspicaracho*, is own brother to the upas tree. Pass near it, and for a week you will look and feel as if you had tangled with an angry swarm of bees; sleep in its shade and you may die. It is evident that the ingredients for the above-described brew are not a comfortable lot to get together; perhaps amateurs had better stick to a simpler formula, as used in the Chocó. All you need for this is a frog. Heat the frog near a fire and he exudes a poison from his head; the best quality is the foamy lather that comes out first, which is effective for a year; the yellowish oil which follows is second-grade stuff, good for only six months. One good frog will take care of fifty arrows.

Interest in the Indian weapons seems to have been mostly academic in Cartagena, for happy and profitable relations continued to hold good. An expedition up the Río Sinú, or Zenú, to a "vast plain where deer were hunted," ruled by a woman chieftain called Finzenú, was as amicable and as lucrative as the first exploration of the interior. Heredia's charm must have been extraordinarily potent, in spite of his nose; Finzenú does not seem to have protested even when the innumerable gold-filled burial mounds were rifled by her visitors. Finzenú, by the way, had a worthy successor four hundred years later—an American woman prosaically named Mrs. Curr, but whom generations of amused and admiring acquaintances called the Queen of the Sinú.

Mrs. Curr came to Cartagena with her husband from Central America; left alone, she remained to follow her bent for unconventional exploration. The upper Río Sinú was her domain; she prospected, she hunted and trapped, she lived for months by herself in the jungle. Usually she went alone, although on at least one occasion she was hired by a large oil company to guide an expedition to the wilds. She never struck it rich, but it was the game that fascinated her, not the prize. In her last

years she kept a small cantina outside Cartagena. There, a gigantic, rawboned old woman, nearly eighty years old and almost blind, she would sometimes yarn by the hour, sitting back with her legs crossed, a big cigar in her mouth and a glass of whisky in her hand. Her language was that of frontier camps and her humor was ribald, but the tales she told were true. She is dead now; I do not think that "in a whiter world, nighty-clad, harped, winged, celibate," the Queen of the Sinú sits by the glassy sea; her soul must be somewhere up beyond Montería, in the jungles she loved and that friended her.

Cartagena of the eighteenth century was not very different in appearance from the walled city of today. The suburbs with their gardened villas, the attractive houses of Bocagrande strung along a palm-fringed beach that looks straight at the sunset, the modern docks, the railway and factories and flying field are all outside the limits of the old town. It is this enclosure within the protecting square of ramparts, built on a narrow strip of land that curves away into a great claw around the bay, that is the essence of Cartagena. Here the streets are narrow; on either side the close-set houses have the secretive solidity of ancient Spain. Doors are tall and heavy, some of them surmounted by embossed coats of arms; windows are barred with lattices set out to give room for a modest señorita to take the air and hear a serenade. Balconies "of wood more durable than iron" hang over the streets, and above them heavy tiled roofs project in wide eaves. There are churches with square bell towers, cloisters filled with trees, green plazas and hidden patios. Don Antonio de Ulloa described them all in 1735, and they are there still.

Ulloa, a real chapetón, found the Creole customs endlessly interesting. His scientific notebooks were filled with description: of the ladies in their hammocks, smoking small cheroots the wrong way round (i.e., with the lighted end in the mouth, a usage that can still be found here and there in rural Colombia); of the remarkable habit of taking hot chocolate, laced with cinnamon and accompanied by bread and honey, one hour after a full meal; and of the immunity of the seemingly languid colonials to the plague that could carry newcomers off in four

days. (The Creoles called these attacks *chapetonadas*; they seem to have been yellow fever.) Obsequies for the distinguished dead also presented some novel features, notably the successive groups of professional mourners who first knelt beside the bier, arms raised in expert lamentation, and then recited the life, and even the loves, of the deceased "in so circumstantial a narrative that a general confession could hardly be more particular."

At the other end of the social scale were the slaves. The first blackbird ship to the New World came in 1564, commanded by the English pirate, slaver and Crown agent, John Hawkins, who was operating on shares with no less a partner than Queen Elizabeth. Since the Spanish authorities had scruples about forcing the Indians to service, the African captives, about whom nobody had any qualms, filled a crying need. How many wretched human cargoes came into port I do not know; San Pedro Claver, the "slave of the slaves," is said to have baptized 300,000 newly arrived Negroes between 1616 and 1650. By the time Ulloa visited the Colony, the variety of mixed bloods was bewildering. The offspring of white and Negro were of course mulattos, and those of white and Indian, *mestizos*; the children of Indian and Negro were called *sambos*—which is where we first got hold of the word. Then there were quadroons, and perplexing gradations known as *terceros* and *quinteros*; the child of a *quintero* and a white was called a Spaniard, thus completing the circle.

There were, naturally, numerous other classifications. Among these were the "Tente en el Ayre," the Suspended in Air, who became neither lighter nor darker, and the "Salto Atrás," the Back-jumps, who were the result of the union of a *quintero*, say, and a *tercero*. And there were *sambos de mulato* and *sambos de quarterone* and *sambos de negro*. Many dark babies were fathered by broken-down adventurers, *pulizones* (beach-combers) who were taken in and cared for by negresses in whom pity was tempered by ambition. No Africans have come to Colombia for a hundred and thirty years, and the death penalty for slave trading or slave holding was in force there forty years before our own Thirteenth Amendment abolished it in the United States. Nevertheless, the possibility that interests so many Colombian intellectuals, of fusing the three strains—

European, Indian and African—into a new and homogeneous race, appears a bigger and rather less manageable problem on the coast than in the highlands of the interior.

Cartagena was the first city of the New Realm to declare absolute independence: in November 1811. Already, more than a year before, she had formed her own Junta, which functioned in the equivocal, legitimistic quasi-independence that marked the early period of the Creole Revolution. Restive at the thought that a central government would mean subservience to Santa Fe, she had immediately constituted herself a spearhead of regional autonomy—a gospel that did not, however, prevent her from forcibly squashing the impertinent autonomous aspirations of Mompós. The idea of a confederation of self-governing equals appealed strongly to most of the Granadan towns, hungry for freedom and importance and innocent of practical political knowledge; at the end of 1811, when the theory was given concrete form under the title of the United Provinces of New Granada, only Cundinamarca refused to join the league.

Nothing could better illustrate the peculiar potency of Bolívar's magnetism than his instant success when he arrived in Cartagena at the end of 1812. Both in a spate of letters and in his famous Manifesto to the Cartageneros, the young Venezuelan stated a political credo that was diametrically opposed to the federalist idea—a credo whose chief article was the necessity of a powerful centralized government, which emphasized expediency and advanced what might be termed the contingent theory of liberty. Yet Cartagena stood sponsor to him, and was steadfast in loyalty when, after passing like a meteor from the Magdalena to Caracas, he returned defeated. A few months later Bolívar was laying siege to the city.

The Liberator came the second time to Cartagena at the end of the summer of 1814. In December the Federal Congress at Tunja sent him to take centralist Santa Fe. There was a double irony in this necessary expedition: it was led by an avowed believer in a single supreme authority on behalf of the supporters of a contrary system, and it was undertaken by ardent advocates of provincial independence in order to crush self-

determination in a nonconforming State. Completely successful, it established the supremacy of the federalist cause, and hence of the principle of state sovereignty—including, as was soon to be all too apparent, that of the State of Cartagena. The next pressing question was Santa Marta. Still obstinately royalist, this loyal port was about to be reinforced with the first Spanish forces sent from Europe to put down the colonial rebellion; it was obviously urgent that the revolutionaries get there first. The task was entrusted to Simón Bolívar.

On January twenty-fourth, 1815, Bolívar started down the Magdalena. After reoccupying Ocaña, he reached Mompós, and from there sent a commission to Cartagena to request arms, ammunition, uniforms and troops. The moves that followed have a terrible importance, for their results were appalling.

The commandant of Cartagena was General Castillo, who could not forget that Bolívar had countered his opposition to the Venezuelan venture by accusing him of unfitness to command and secretly requesting his removal. Less than lukewarm to any Bolivarian initiative, he suggested that the forces from Santa Fe concentrate at Cartagena; Bolívar replied by sending one commissioner, while his troops occupied some of the Province's towns. Castillo then proposed that Bolívar attack Santa Marta from the south while he sent forces by a different route; Bolívar answered by marching on Cartagena to take what he needed to carry on the campaign in his own way. The representative of the Federal Government instructed Bolívar to fall back, whereupon he resigned his command and asked for a ship to take him away from New Granada. The Government representative, ordering a vessel to be ready at once, accepted the resignation, at which Bolívar withdrew it and laid siege to Cartagena for over a month, occupying the hill of La Popa.

All this gave the army from Spain time to land comfortably in Venezuela and organize undisturbed the campaign against the United Provinces. The Royalists of Santa Marta proceeded to take the lower Magdalena; and Mompós, left unguarded, fell at once into Spanish hands. Bolívar, protesting that as he was not trusted, he could not lead a force against Santa Marta, resigned definitely and sailed away to Jamaica. Cartagena,

weakened by the month's siege, prepared to withstand the well-organized attack of eleven thousand veteran troops, perfectly equipped and commanded by officers of long experience. Every able-bodied citizen from sixteen to fifty was called to the colors; the near-by towns were burned to prevent supplies reaching the enemy; women gave their jewels, churches their silver, patriots destroyed their own haciendas to deprive the advancing Spaniards of food and livestock.

For three and a half months, while a tight blockade by sea and land prevented the crowded city from bringing in any food, the patriots fought off the Spanish army; as the weeks passed, famine and disease stalked the town. People ate "rotten meat and flour, rancid codfish, horses, mules, burros, dogs, rats and skins. . . . Foreign speculators profiteered without mercy." The dead mounted into thousands, and there was no one to move the putrefying corpses; on the day before the tottering survivors spiked their guns and attempted to run the blockade, three hundred men and women died of hunger in the streets.

When at last Morillo and his army entered the city, they found a stinking desolation, so horrible that the Spanish general Montalvo said it was difficult to breathe. Six thousand people had perished; under promise of amnesty, Morillo gathered four hundred more and shot them on the beach. Two months later Castillo, who had been supplanted in the command and imprisoned, was executed together with other famous patriots. Among them was García de Toledo, who had once, at the very beginning of the Revolution, saved Cartagena from a royalist coup, and who in the last days of the siege had wanted to send all surviving noncombatants out of the city and blow up the magazines. The Inquisition was re-established, and Montalvo was appointed Viceroy. Spanish troops swept through the country; within six months the reconquest was complete. The independent Republic of the United Provinces of New Granada was dead.

On June twenty-fourth, 1821, Bolívar won the battle of Carabobo which "by making royalist reconquest impossible in Venezuela and New Granada, set Bolívar free to extirpate royalism from the continent by victory in Quito and in Perú." That same night a patriot force fell on Cartagena by sea and

land. It was the revolutionaries' turn to besiege. On October first the Spanish governor surrendered, and Spanish troops saluted for the first time the tricolor of Colombia.

All these things must be remembered when one visits the Heroic City. They are not cold history of the printed page; at every step there is a tangible reminder of the past, the physical framework of centuries of life. Old Cartagena is like a stage still set for a drama played long ago; it is easy to fill in the players. In fact it is impossible not to do so; they jostle one at every turn. Standing on the walls, so broad that their top forms wide paved terraces, near a tower of La Tenaza, one can vision lean soldiers staring out past the strip of palms and sand to sea, alert for danger; a redan can wake to drama, peopled with sentries straining for a sign that says foe or friend as they watch a few specks on the horizon grow to tall ships leaning from the wind, beating down the coast with arched sails white in the sun. San Felipe speaks from every stone of pirates and patriots, war and siege; and so do all the other fortresses with holy names: San Fernando and San José, whose ruins stand on either side of the harbor entrance (it was at San Fernando that don Sancho Jimeno held out against Pointis; in its dungeons Nariño was imprisoned, and Francisco de Paula Santander was held there for three months before banishment), San Sebastián and San Lorenzo, Santa Cruz and El Angel. Altogether, in the city's heyday there were twenty-nine forts and bastions, nearly all called after the great saints of the Church—fifteen of them set in the inner circle of walls, and six in the outer one, which, persistently biblical, was named Gethsemane.

San Felipe de Barajas, the most important single fortress in Spanish America, was a hundred years in building. Scarped and faced, the little hill is a masterpiece of defense works, a stronghold made of battlements and castellated terraces, guardhouses and casemates, tunnels and underground passages whose plan is not yet completely discovered. On the topmost terrace, a kind of belvedere surrounded by deeply crenellated walls cornered with watchtowers, there is the shell of the old chapel. The twelve cannon that were called the Twelve Apostles no longer thrust their muzzles in brazen menace toward land and sea, and from the empty embrasures one can look out over the city, a

design in white and green carved in devious curves by waters of the inner bay and the Laguna del Cabrero.

Walking through the electric-lighted subterranean galleries—some with fiendish niches for prisoners cut into the walls, some planned for enfilading any chance invaders from within, some almost humorous blind alleys, designed to trap uninformed enemies—I asked the custodian about the tunnel that is supposed to lead all the way to the church of San Pedro Claver. His knowledge of it went just as far as the barrier that blocks it after 250 feet, but he defended himself nobly, with vague remarks uttered in a conclusive tone. I persisted: What did they think was there? Skeletons? Treasure? Why had no one tried to excavate further?

“Oh—well, they are afraid.”

“Afraid? Of what?”

He was evidently cornered.

“Of crocodiles,” he said with great firmness and finality, putting an end to all questions not in the guides’ manual.

One treasure has apparently been found, and that quite recently. A few years ago two Spaniards turned up in Cartagena, armed with the secret map of hoary tradition, and announced freely that they were on the trail of hidden riches. They seemed too ingenuous to be taken seriously—until one day they disappeared, leaving a new hole in the wall of a corridor in San Felipe, a hole that gives into a small square chamber that is now obtrusively empty.

La Popa, where Bolívar camped when he laid seige to the city and where Morillo’s soldiers were repulsed at the bayonet by the defending Cartageneros, stands like a sentinel outside the city. It was not fortified, however; the buildings that crown it are what is left of the Convent of Nuestra Señora de la Candelaria—Our Lady of Candlemas. The monastery and chapel were built in 1608 by an Augustinian priest who had been commanded to do so in a vision, and who realized the urgency of his task when he climbed the chosen hill to find a gathering of natives intent in worship of a large goat. Fray Alonso wasted no time on exhortation; staff in hand he drove the Indians down the hill and the four-footed deity over the cliff, in the place that is called the Goat’s Leap.

Every Candlemas the people of Cartagena went in pilgrimage to La Popa, climbing to the summit with thank-offerings to the Madonna for the mercies of the year that was past. And so they do today; the Feast of La Candelaria is observed with the same devotion, although the convent is a ruin open to the sky. Yet it is a ruin one would not have touched; for it has the heart-catching beauty of perfectly proportioned arches, row above row, seen in intersecting and soaring parabolas; the stripped purity of curve laid on curve would be lost if the building were complete.

In the city there are reminders of the Colony that stand almost unchanged. One is the house of the Inquisition, where the Holy Office, established in Cartagena in 1610 and only abolished a hundred and twenty years ago, had its Tribunal; the building is merely a larger edition of the balconied colonial dwellings, but the entrance, two stories tall and ornately stuccoed, is proud and imposing. The Cathedral dates from 1538; Santo Domingo, with its arches and cloisters, its square domed tower and ancient walls, was built in 1551. It drowns in a corner of the city that has not altered in three hundred years; the scarred walls are witness to the bombardment of the French pirates. San Pedro Claver, which seen across the still lagoon from Bocagrande looks very Venetian, was begun in 1603.

In the church that bears his name, the body of the saint lies in a glass coffin beneath the high altar. It looks curiously small, hardly larger than that of a child; it is amazing to think what strength the burning spirit of the slave's slave gave to this fragile shell. In the adjoining convent, through the rank patio where palm trees reach almost to the top of the triple-arched cloister walls, is the room, now a chapel, in which he sat watching for the ships from Africa to come into harbor. Almost before they tied up, he was on the dock; the sick, bewildered prisoners who staggered from the holds were his children. He did not rest till he had brought them to Christianity; he was the hound of God.

An astonishing number of convents and churches were built between 1550 and 1650. Not all of them survive, and some that still stand have suffered a sea change. The Convent of San Diego is now the State Prison; that of Santa Clara is a Charity

Hospital; the Law Courts occupy the Convent of La Merced, where Morillo kept some of his prisoners before executing them by the original method of driving nails into their heads; and La Merced church is the Municipal Theater. The State Police are in the Convent of Santa Teresa de Jesús. And yet it is not a symbol of the new supplanting and suffocating the old—rather it is the old, so unobtrusively strong, that still dominates the new. Cartagena of docks and factories and country clubs, of airports and oil terminals, exists, of course—but the twentieth century cannot impose itself on the seventeenth. It must adapt itself—build its airy modern houses outside, drive its automobiles slowly through the ancient streets.

Cartagena has always been the capital of a vast district, but it has lived to itself, neither influencing nor being influenced by its hinterland. It was a seaport, a mart, a center of government and a symbol of empire—not a county seat. Its very position sets it apart, for it lies almost at the apex of the tapering northern part of the province; the bulk of the 40,000 square miles of prairie and jungle that make up the department of Bolívar is to the south, without so much as a highway to connect it with the capital.

In the savanna land of the interior there are great cattle haciendas, some of them running forty or fifty thousand head, but the system is the casual one of the early West, and the yield is poor. A \$2,000,000 packing plant that was built at Coveñas twenty years or so ago folded almost as soon as it was completed; the owners were surprised and pleased when they were able to get a little of their investment back by selling the whole thing to be the nucleus of the new Barco pipeline terminal. The great sugar refinery at Sincerín, near Cartagena, is a magnificent enterprise, but one cannot consider it as typical or even usual; the Central Colombia, with its 9,500 acres of sugar cane, its private railway and modern equipment, is very nearly unique. People who know the Sinú country swear by it, and Corozal and Ayapel (two lovely names) are due to be improved, but certainly until some kind of communication beyond trails and rivers is created, Bolívar department will continue to be little known and less developed.

Perhaps, now that Barranquilla has pulled itself up by its bootstraps to be the first port of the Atlantic coast, Cartagena (who had a fine head start, had she made up her mind to profit by her splendid harbor and her railway and channel through to the Magdalena) will turn her attention to the possibilities at her back door. But it will not be easy. Those who criticize the Pearl for lack of enterprise and practical drive—they are often the same people who find Antioquia, and even El Valle, distressingly commercial-minded—should stop to realize that a baroque seigneur cannot be changed into a modern businessman overnight. Courage, generosity, an easy hedonism—all the faults and virtues of unquestioned rank have made up the special character of Cartagena. It will take more than a few decades to turn it to the busy inventiveness of industrial competition. If, indeed, that is what is wanted.

CHAPTER XXIX

Poets, Politics and Polemics

BOGOTÁ is built along the edge of the Sabana as cities are built along the edge of water. In shape it is a narrow strip, fifteen kilometers from end to end; on one side the abrupt rise of the easternmost Andean ridge borders it like a wall; on the other the plain laps at the last diminishing streets, crowding back the houses as if its open levels were a barrier rather than an invitation.

The air is cool as northern spring. Bogotá lies at 8,700 feet above sea level, and thus lifted above its latitude, knows nothing of the heat and exuberance of the torrid lands below. It is the temperate tropic: never hot and never very cold, where winds roar gently as any sucking dove, where the rainfall is not excessive and the humidity about medium. It may be that this almost oppressive moderation has a sedative effect: the character of Bogotanos is reputedly tuned to muted chords, inclined to a somewhat pessimistic intellectualism, more speculative than creative.

How, and how much, character depends upon geography is a moot point, but one thing is sure: history—yesterday's and tomorrow's—depends on character. The most important thing about the capital of Colombia is the people who live there.

The Bogotano is an intellectual. He is brilliant in conversation, and frequently so in print; if the gift of language is a particularly Colombian characteristic, the Bogotano has it to a remarkable degree. The number of men who turn out polished prose with the apparent ease of breathing is legion; they toss

off witty and searching articles with a simple turn of the wrist, and balanced periods drip from their ready pens.

For this it is not necessary to be a professional; indeed, it is as difficult to draw a line between writers and nonwriters as between politicians and nonpoliticians, for the frontier fades into a hazy half-world of gifted amateurs. If nothing else, the exponents of political theories compose long and impeccably styled open letters to one another, in which contention and criticism are set forth with elegance, as a tough cutlet might be masked in smooth and piquant sauce. "Read me and I'll read you" is supposed to be what one Bogotano says to another.

Those who do not write, admire. Mention a man of prominence in business and they murmur politely, "Ah, yes, very able"; speak of an author and their faces light up: "Sumamente interesante!" they exclaim, in the long-drawn-out syllables of enthusiasm. Poets are not caviar to the general, but beloved familiars. Where but in Bogotá would a day laborer wreck the classic marble bust of a popular poet with a well-aimed rock, and then, transparently sincere, explain to the judge that it was because its well-tailored correctitude was an insult to the adored memory of the tousled, homely genius? (Case dismissed.)

The Bogotanos might have charged with the Light Brigade—that sort of thing is quite in line with their traditions—but not because they did not reason why. Reasoning why is their favorite pastime. They do it beautifully, with that satisfactory Latin habit of light profundity that comes from a lively sense of irony superimposed on a classico-philosophical training. They enjoy dissecting every question down to the last nerve, but there seems to be often more pleasure in the surgical dexterity than interest in the cure, and the final bulletin must sometimes read, "Operation perfectly successful; patient dead."

This analytical-cum-satirical bent has been at once their blessing and their curse. Irony is a very adult and highly civilized trait, but it is no particular help in getting things done. When people have a keen sense of the ridiculous, and the intelligence to apply it to themselves, they are freer intellectually—and a lot more fun—than simpler souls, but they lose out on constructive drive. Irony and illusions do not make good bedfellows, and illusions, particularly if they are unconscious,

are very productive phenomena when applied to practical ends.

The constant, unwearied interest of most Bogotanos is politics. Not so much politics as an individual power game, not the politics of machines and bosses, but politics as national principle, as policy and as a kind of superlative sport. All their historical sense, their gift for dialectics, their passionate patriotism and their facile acuteness of expression favor this fascinating avocation. Professional politicians are rare, but the number of men who combine private business with intermittent public office is enormous.

There is a great deal to be said for the Colombian system. For one thing, it is remarkably free from graft or nest-feathering; the records of men in high executive or judicial position is one of which any country could be proud and that a good many might imitate with advantage. For another, it does away with that unfortunate mental attitude that afflicts our public men, whereby an ex-President cannot be happy as a mere Minister and an ex-Secretary would consider a third-rank government job to be a fate worse than death. In Colombia, since everyone is informed, opinionated and communicative about national affairs, there is no room for the feeling that only career politicians can make a success of administration.

The basis of political life is very simple. There are two parties, the Liberal and the Conservative. The Conservatives, and with them the Church, ruled the country for nearly fifty consecutive years; in 1930 the Liberals returned to power and are still firmly in the saddle. The vestigial Communist party counts three thousand members; efforts to encourage a Socialist party, whose leftism would emphasize the essential soundness of the innovating Liberals, died of inanition.

There are, of course, left-wing and right-wing Conservatives as well as moderate and extremist Liberals. At times rightist Liberals and leftist Conservatives see briefly eye to eye; the Republican party, now defunct, was an attempt at this kind of middle course, and there are indications that some such common focus may emerge in the elections of 1942. Early in 1940 the Liberal party began to show a faint crack; in the campaign preceding the Congressional election of March 1941 this became a definite split. The Liberals were divided into Lopistas

(adherents of ex-President López) and anti-Lopistas; one of the main issues was neutrality and self-determination, favored by López, versus identification with United States' policies. The returns confirmed the Lopista strength, but the National Liberal Convention meets in July to nominate a presidential candidate for 1942, and it is hard to foretell what conflicts, alliances or compromises may emerge. It was a split in the Conservative ranks—which coincided with a sudden, and unwonted, cohesion of the Liberals—that lost them the elections of 1930; it nominated two distinguished candidates, neither of whom would withdraw; the Archbishop, whose arbitrage was invoked, endorsed both of them, alternately and repeatedly, and the Liberal Olaya Herrera was elected by an overwhelming majority.

Dr. Enrique Olaya Herrera was a moderate Liberal and a great statesman. No executive could have been better equipped to ease the country through the transition from one regime to another. Very few in the history of Colombia have gathered such general respect, admiration and devotion, or been mourned with such lasting sense of loss.

He was succeeded by Dr. Alfonso López Pumarejo. It is probably significant (though I am not sure of what) that while the first modern Liberal President was, and is, referred to always as Dr. Olaya, or possibly Olaya Herrera, the second is universally spoken of simply as Alfonso López. Tall, distinguished, with a mind as smooth and sharp as a steel blade, he combines extreme acuteness with disarming frankness. Even Colombians who do not agree with his ideas or methods—both of which have a kind of simple daring as effective as it is unconventional—recognize his peculiar ability and the force of his personality, and many of them, clinging to their opposed convictions, feel kin to the politico who excused refusal of a face-to-face encounter with an adversary by the confession: "I'm afraid to expose myself to his personal charm." Dr. López applies a dynamic and somewhat disingenuous common sense to statesmanship; since politics have come to have the esoteric formalism of a grade-school secret society, this can be very disconcerting. Isolated from its setting, his regime was less startling than many people imagine, though radical enough in relation to the people

to whom it was applied. He believes that slow reforms are in effect a contradiction in terms, that omelets cannot be made without breaking eggs; he holds that Colombians are capable of doing a great deal more under their own power than they themselves have believed, and that a few tumbles are nothing compared to the advantages of learning to walk alone.

It is never easy to make clear the nuances of political currents and feelings in another country, but in the case in point the parallel between the situation in the United States and that of Colombia is close enough to make detailed explanation unnecessary. The López administration resembled in many ways (notably in labor policies) that of Roosevelt; the motives of praise, blame and doubt were more or less the same. Opposition within the party and much of that outside it is rooted in a like anxiety that after all those nice eggs have been broken the omelet will result in a pain, so that the attitude of right-wing Liberals toward another term is not dissimilar from that of non-New Deal Democrats; and the devotion of his admirers is based on related convictions of the leader's vision, force and talent for getting things done while others talk.

The four-year term of Alfonso López was marked by far-reaching judicial initiatives. The constitution was re-formed, and foreign investors eyed Article 10 with a wild surmise, for it authorizes expropriation not only *with* indemnity "for motives of public utility and social interest" but also *without* it "for reasons of equity"—provided the majority of both houses of Congress approve the measure. This is not, of course, the sort of thing heavy interests most enjoy, equity being the elastic term it is, but on the other hand Colombia is in the unique position of having the bulk of her natural resources and public utilities in foreign hands, and no doubt felt that in the absence of some such legislation she might find herself with a hollow kind of sovereignty.

The new labor laws are comprehensive. The main points are workmen's compensation (the maximum being two years' pay for permanent total disability), group insurance, compulsory holidays (including eight weeks with pay for pregnant women), the eight-hour day and forty-eight-hour week, "dismissal benefits" (one month's salary for each year of employment).

The law recognizes syndicates, both vertical and horizontal; strikes are declared legal under prescribed rules, but sit-downs and slow-downs are forbidden; an elaborate machinery for conciliation and arbitration is set up; questions of hygiene, equipment, safety and so forth are exhaustively gone into. Foreign firms, except in special and temporary cases, may not employ more than 10 per cent of non-Colombian labor and 20 per cent of non-Colombian employees. Absent-minded employers (if there are any left in Colombia) must note well the date of expiration of all labor and white-collar contracts, for in the absence of formal cancellation the law considers these to have been automatically renewed.

Tax reform was another important measure, and although taxes *per se* rarely inspire affection, no one has a word of criticism for the laws that corrected an absurd situation. Before 1936 Colombian taxation was extremely modest, and even such tributes as were due were ineffectually collected. No one paid taxes, except in the manner of a government making a symbolic payment on its external debt. Under the new laws, the maximum tax on net income is 17 per cent; patrimony tax may reach .08 per cent in the highest brackets; that on excess profits (i.e., profits that exceed, when other taxes and exemptions are deducted, 12 per cent of the patrimony) can run as high as 30 per cent, but are susceptible to modification. Altogether, the revenue from these once dead-letter sources amounted in 1939 to more than nineteen million pesos. Incidentally, a proof of that economic theory that the more children a man must support the more capacity he acquires to support them, the number of tax-paying business concerns has increased by 256 per cent since the laws went into force.

The present President of the Republic is Dr. Eduardo Santos. More moderate than his predecessor, he announced on taking office that his administration would be one of consolidation rather than innovation, a policy that has been maintained.

The Santos family has been described in a few perfect pages by Daniel Samper. The father, no writer but a kind of apostle of literature, the mother, so deeply wise and strong, gave their children something better than money—of which there was remarkably little. Eduardo Santos' love of the things of the

mind, his simplicity, tolerance, integrity and disdain of money are his inheritance. He is not a go-getter, and is about as far from the conventional idea of a politician as could be imagined; there is a quality of gentleness about him as well as a kind of moral inflexibility, which is more associated with the humanities than the ballot box. All in all, he gives the impression that public life is to him something between an exile and a dedication.

Frequent residence in Europe (he is a graduate in law of the Sorbonne and represented his country with notable distinction at the League of Nations) and omnivorous reading in four or five languages have given an added consistency to Eduardo Santos' dispassionate—and compassionate—understanding. The impact of his personality has nothing to do with externals—Doctor Santos is quiet, of medium height, neither blond nor dark, well dressed in an uninterested fashion, and oblivious of contrived effects—but rather what our fathers, who had not our *pudeur* about sentiment, called an inward and spiritual grace. Politically, he is trusted, and because before being statesman or President he is a very great gentleman, whose charm is an emanation rather than an exercise, he has the deep affection of Colombians.

Chief executives may not stand for immediate re-election in Colombia, although they may have an unlimited number of terms provided these are not consecutive. The system no doubt has advantages to which the dictator-shy Colombians are particularly alive, but it is not without its drawbacks.

Because discussion of the next incumbent does not directly involve the one in office at the time, one President may hardly have entered upon his duties before controversy starts over his successor. Perhaps in a country so absorbed by political ideas and personalities a six-year term would give a longer breathing space; as it is, an election is always somewhere about, hovering in the middle distance when it is not right down in front. It is as if the people were treated to a succession of exciting but rather indigestible dinners, with hardly a pause between the postprandial coffee and a lively consideration of the next menu. On the other hand, if López could carry out what amounted to a painless revolution—a remodeled Constitution, advanced labor regulation, sweeping tax reform, definite sepa-

ration of Church and State, state control of education, and a National University—in the space of four years, many would argue that no one should have longer.

It is obviously impossible to look, however briefly, at all the men who play a prominent part in national life, even if the field is limited to the capital. With great self-denial I have chosen, rather arbitrarily, six who in a special degree have shaped, and are shaping, the thought and destinies of modern Colombia. Of two we have already spoken: Eduardo Santos and Alfonso López. The other are Luis López de Mesa, Minister of Foreign Relations; Luis Cano, editor of *El Espectador*; Agustín Nieto Caballero, Rector of the National University; and Laureano Gómez, Conservative leader and editor of *El Siglo*.

The representative six are very different one from another, but they have a common bond—they are all of the *generación del centenario*, the generation that came to manhood about the time of the first centenary of the Revolution. These are the men who were children when the country was torn in two by the terrible civil war of 1899–1902; and to a small boy, three years is a very long time. The hard hostility of radicals and conservatives reached into every home; fathers, uncles, older brothers were somewhere in the mountains or food for vultures; there were plunderings and reprisals. The children of the Thousand Days grew up with a hatred of violence and the determination that the new Colombia, born in travail and humiliation, should really live up to its motto: Liberty and Order. They are a remarkable lot, this generation of intellectually combative idealists, many of them the young Liberals who are now not so young, and they had to take responsibility early, for those who came just before them had been cut down in the war.

Dr. Luis López de Mesa, guide, philosopher and friend of a group that has come to mean a great deal in Colombia, is a distinguished sociologist as well as a highly individual writer on subjects ranging from metaphysical speculation to the balance of trade. His style is unmistakable; it tinctures the most practical discussion with some idealistic leaven and gives a touch of immediacy to the most transcendental topic. An inexhaustible, one might say affectionate, interest in human behavior (more, perhaps, as threads in a universal pattern than

as isolated cases) goes arm in arm with his medical experience; he examines his country—and more particularly his countrymen—like a diagnostician and prescribes for them like a family doctor. He enjoys talk, but not small talk; his polite, absent-thought-present manner when listening to a bit of gay scandal must be slightly dampening, particularly as it seems more bent, in a kind of detached observation, on the teller than the tale.

Very tall, fair and restrained, López de Mesa has a kind of mildness that should not be mistaken for meekness. He writes as he thinks, and what he thinks is not patterned on conformist platitudes. His works, at once sensitive and erudite, stimulate one to admiration coupled with a burning desire for argument—which is an eminently satisfactory combination. As Minister of Foreign Relations he urges untiringly two policies that he believes necessary for Colombia's well being: intensive development of domestic production in as many fields as possible, and wholehearted collaboration with the United States.

Don Agustín Nieto Caballero is frequently called "the apostle of education." This automatically calls to mind a venerable figure, stooped, bearded, solemn and be-spectacled—a picture inexact on every count. However, if don Agustín lacks the conventional apostolic physique, he is abundantly supplied with authentic apostolic fervor—mercifully laced with humor. Both have stood him in good stead in his twenty-five-year battle for educational reform. It has not been altogether easy; reformers are seldom *personae gratae* to the devotees of Things As They Are, to say nothing of Nieto Caballero's iconoclastic insistence that what the country needed was not golden-tongued orators but silent workers. Fortunately, apostles thrive on opposition.

He is not, however, an unhonored prophet. He was Director of Education from 1932 to 1936; he has twice represented his country at Geneva; his pre-eminent position in his chosen field is singularly unaffected by politics. He was guest of honor at the International Educational Congress in England in 1936 and unanimously elected president of the World Congress of Education in Geneva. In 1940 he headed the Colombian delegation to the eighth Pan-American Scientific Congress at Washington. In Latin America his doctrines (which begin with diet and toothbrushes and end with modern academic training adapted

to local conditions) have been a beacon on the road to liberal pedagogy. The reorganized normal schools, the revamped primary schools, the Gimnasio Moderno and the Gimnasio Feminino, the new National University, even the kitchens and vacation colonies which he founded and supported for needy children are not, of course, the work of one man. But "the future is in the hands of schoolteachers," as Victor Hugo remarked; it would be hard to overestimate Nieto Caballero's contribution to his country's development.

The two other men on our all-too-short list are both journalists and both political leaders: Luis Cano, a left-wing Liberal, son of the famous don Fidel and brother-in-law of Agustín Nieto Caballero; and Laureano Gómez, the embattled Conservative chief.

Politics and journalism are inextricably mixed in Bogotá. The daily paper is not so much a purveyor of up-to-the-minute news as a forum, a podium, a sounding board and broadcasting device. The leaders in journalism are almost without exception more or less passionate spokesmen of a political point of view. They wield immense influence, consciously and indefatigably; their names are household words all over the country, and in different tones and voices they speak for Colombia. In Bogotá, the leading dailies are *El Tiempo*, *El Espectador*, and *El Siglo*. The first two are Liberal organs, the last is Conservative.

El Tiempo, which Eduardo Santos bought from Alfonso Villegas Restrepo, is edited by the President's brother, Enrique Santos. Blond, humorous, carefree and keen, don Enrique is the kind of newspaper man that would be recognized as a brother by his kind all over the world. His shabby, two-by-four office is mostly desk, surmounted by a patently false sign reading NO SE FUMA; the general atmosphere has all the secluded repose of Grand Central Terminal at the rush hour. Enrique Santos' copious and spirited editorials have not the undertone of doctrinal responsibility and apostolic torchbearing that marks those of many of his confreres, but they are remarkably good reading.

Don Luis Cano, journalist and Liberal by direct inheritance and intimate conviction, is the editor of *El Espectador*. By virtue of an ardent faith couched in reasoned and polished prose he has come to be the forefront of the thoroughgoing liberalism

that some call "true" and others "extreme." Like Olaya Herrera and Eduardo Santos, he was a member of that short-lived middle-way Republican party that was called "a layer of cotton between two crystals." His style appears to be a matter of some discussion; to Samper it is "compact, concise, harmonious," expressing with clarity and elegance in four lines what other authors put in four pages. To Juan Lozano, himself a brilliant, caustic writer whose pen is built very like a scalpel, it is "woven of subtleties, distinctions, clarifications and rectifications in which each word constitutes a commentary on the one preceding," the expression of a complex nature ill adapted to journalism—"which, like all apostolates, feeds on categorical banalities and unsupported affirmations."

Whatever the reaction to his literary manner—and any manner that habitually uses such phrases as "the terrible peace of the defeated," "that deplorable virtue, humility," and "as aggressive as an epigram of Martial" has my respectful admiration—there are no two opinions about his intellectual honesty and the sincerity of his convictions. Himself spoken of as presidential timber, he is a devoted admirer of Alfonso López.

El Siglo is the paper of don Laureano Gómez, the Conservative leader. An extraordinarily able parliamentarian, one of the best informed of Colombians, and an orator of signal denunciatory talent, don Laureano has been almost as troublesome to Conservatives as to Liberals. Opposition is his meat and drink, and when Gómez opposes, he opposes tooth and nail. At present, he breathes fire against the Liberals, but it was when his own party was in power that he delivered his famous "lectures against the country." The New York press has been rather bitter about don Laureano's "anti-Americanism"—not the happiest choice of phrase—for he has recently been "viewing with alarm" what he defines as the advancing hegemony of the northern Colossus, unconsolated by the consideration that it is to be all done by kindness. Since the administration of Doctor Santos is unequivocally in favor of nearer and dearer relations with the United States, this attitude is not unexpected, particularly after the Havana Conference.

It is harder to say what Doctor Gómez is *for* than to say what he is *against*, but he is undoubtedly the most outstanding and

most vocal, if not the most orthodox, member of the second Colombian party. He is frequently the impassioned advocate of views his colleagues do not share, and at times the critic of things which they hold dear, but his position remains unchallenged.

There are others who count for much, and will no doubt count for more, in Colombian life. Gabriel Turbay, present Ambassador to the United States, who, still young, has already held the portfolios of the Interior and of Foreign Relations as well as other official and diplomatic posts of high importance, and who is undoubtedly marked for further office; Carlos Lozano, brother of Juan, Minister to Brazil; Jorge Eliecer Gaitán, brilliant criminal lawyer, now Minister of Education; the young Conservative, Silvio Villegas; Plinio Mendoza, leftist political leader of Boyacá; Alfonso Araújo, Minister of Public Works—these are some who are outstanding.

In 1931 an anthology of Colombian literature from the Revolution to our times was published in Bogotá. Daniel Samper devoted nine years to compilation and annotation; the collection is in one hundred volumes. It is clearly impossible to take in a panorama of these proportions at a glance. Even a surface idea of the more significant living writers would need a book in itself.

Only the very young of us can have escaped some early experience with an album-addicted relative. The massive tomes, enshrining the yellowed and uncertain products of Auntie's Brownie, were paged to a running commentary: This is your uncle Edward—years ago, of course. And here is that nice young man—what was his name?—who married Annie Spellman from Cincinnati. He skated beautifully. . . . It was an experience from which the hardest visitor emerged dazed and glassy eyed, yet I feel the Victorian urge upon me. This wise and gentle old man, I would say, is Antonio Gómez Restrepo, doyen of poets, polished critic, whose fame goes far beyond the borders of Colombia or South America. This is Baldomero Sanín Cano, polyglot and cosmopolitan, still at seventy-plus an unquiet seeker after new things in the literature of the world; erudite, heterodox, categorical and a molder of opinion. This is

the novelist Tomás Carrasquilla—gently ironic creator of living characters whose speech is the easy, salty talk of Antioquia—whom a famous European critic judged “the most polished and natural writer in Castilian of the nineteenth century.” This is Laureano García Ortiz, jurist and diplomat, who has just completed a definitive biography of Santander. That small, rather shy man is Tomás Rueda Vargas, as famed (and beloved) for his conversation as for the quality of his slender literary output. Here is Armando Solano, skeptical, ironic and at times sentimental, who writes newspaper columns as highly finished essays.

The tall young man is Germán Arciniegas; that dark one, who looks consumed from within, is the brilliant Juan Lozano y Lozano. This is Alberto Lleras Camargo, and this is Antonio García; this is Jorge Zalamea. This one, of whom a prelate said, “If he were a believer, he would be a perfect man of God,” is Luis Eduardo Nieto; that is the historian Hernández de Alba. And there are others—many others.

Many of these, *more solito*, have an official or at least a public life. Of the younger generation, Lleras Camargo was Premier at twenty-nine, with Alfonso López; Jorge Zalamea was Secretary of Education; Germán Arciniegas, to whom the National University owes so much, is in the diplomatic service; Luis Eduardo Nieto has been President of the House of Deputies; Daniel Samper was counselor of embassy in Washington.

I have not said much, specifically, about poets. This is because they are not a race apart, poets exclusively and professionally. Bogotanos are poets by innate disposition rather than by isolated consecration. And while with us a cabinet minister or a corporation lawyer who wrote poetry, openly and romantically, would be regarded with grave suspicion, in Colombia they are considered to have one more shining *atout* for any position. Colombians see nothing odd in being head of the Bureau of Patents and Trademarks, and poet; Minister of State, and poet; Secretary of the Commission for Physical Culture, and poet; Minister of the Treasury, and poet; municipal inspector, and poet; shopkeeper, and poet; Director of the Posts and Telegraphs, and poet; judge, senator, lawyer, banker—and poet. And it goes without saying: President, and poet.

The lyric vein runs free in every class; those who are not

culturally equipped to school the muse to classic forms turn out ballads—verses that still find their public and which may be sold in the market for a few centavos a copy. A friend told me that once, when he was riding near Santa Marta, he met a ragged, unshaven hobo who asked for the usual handout. His story was that he came from Bogotá and had no one to help him so far from home; he needed money for the journey.

“So you’re from Bogotá?” said the Santa Martan. “Then you must be a poet.”

“Sí, señor. Soy poeta,” replied the tramp, unmoved.

“Prove it, and I’ll believe your story.”

The man drew himself up, and his face settled in firmer lines. For twenty minutes he declaimed, and seemed set to continue indefinitely; standing there in the dusty road, he rolled out sonorous periods while passing peons checked their burros to listen openmouthed. My friend felt rather cheap as he handed over the promised reward.

Colombian poetry, whether it is the classic and flowered poetry of yesterday or “modern” to brutality, is romantic, pantheistic and personal. Inevitably so, for it is the expression of a people that for all its irony is essentially romantic and personal, and upon whom there lies heavy and ineluctible the pressure of Nature at her most insistent. In short, Colombians are poets because they are Colombians.

CHAPTER XXX

Santa Fe de Bogotá

WHETHER ALL CITIES ARE FEMININE is open to discussion. Of some, like Paris or Venice or Vienna, there can be no question, but others are sexless, indeterminate creatures, and some seem positively male. It is impossible to think of Chicago as feminine.

Bogotá is undoubtedly a lady—but what kind of lady? She is a great deal more complex than Popayán, that little aristocrat musing on her stormy past. The type is European—spirited, but carefully obedient to convention. In fact, when thinking of the Sabana city I am persistently reminded of a Continental friend to whom I am much attached—and who would no doubt be surprised to learn that she has become inextricably involved in my mind with the capital of a South American republic. Renée (the name will do for present purposes) is an extremely attractive woman, but her subtle and cultivated intelligence, of whose profundity it is neither easy nor necessary to judge, is a stronger arm than her beauty. She combines great piety with an elegant cynicism, and impeccable social correctitude with considerable fire; she is devoted to her family, and though rather critical of them herself, is quick to freeze any impertinent outside reflections. Cordial, even affectionate, yet with sudden odd evasions, she is gracious, somewhat malicious, skeptical and a faithful friend to such as get beyond the pleasant surface. Renée is not simple, but (or is it therefore?) she is charming, and a great deal more interesting than those hearty, forthright gals generically known as good sorts. In short, she is Bogotá.

Time was when Colombians used to approach Bogotá with considerable caution lest the sudden change of altitude should

affect them too much. They stopped over once or twice on the way up, easing themselves gradually into the thin air of the Sabana, a mile and a half above the narrowing Magdalena. Now they fly from sea level in less than three hours, merely taking the precaution of putting on heavy woollens in the tropical heat of Barranquilla in order to be suitably dressed for arrival in the springtime chill of the capital. The May air of a dry-season Sabana morning is to me the last word in perfection. There are people, however, who are not happy living at such heights. The altitude affects them (unless there is some organic weakness) as a depressive: small annoyances take on vast proportions, there is a Werther-like consciousness of the fugacity of human joys and the multitude of human sorrows. Enthusiasms die quickly; objectives that briefly appeared desirable later seem not worth the effort; emotions are neither so imperious nor so direct as in the tropical lowlands. As for the Bogotano of the lower class, in whom the Indian is strong, he is reserved, devious and apathetic. It is probable, however, that many causes besides atmospheric pressure have contributed to this unbullient temperament, which López de Mesa illustrates in a description of two lovers "holding hands for long hours without effusion, without rhythm, from time to time smiling in obedience to a slow, slight impulse of concealed emotion, as if they lived in the desolate atmosphere of a lunar world."

It is not an inspiring picture, but it is worth noting that they hold hands for long hours; their emotion, if recondite, is protracted. As further evidence I would like to offer a small straw in the wind, seen over a public telephone in a shop just off the Calle Real: "Normal calls, 5 centavos. Lovers, 15 centavos."

Certainly, in spite of the climate, Bogotanos have shown quite as much capacity for prolonged and strenuous effort as have other Colombians—which is considerable. Their exertions were not always directed where they would do most good, but they were both vigorous and stubborn; the history of the nineteenth century in Colombia is one only a resistant people could have sustained without a complete national breakdown. Yet somehow they came through it, battered, exhausted, but right side up. It is as if the centuries of colonial stagnation had

resulted in an unconscious accumulation of energy, which exploded in the Revolution and continued to discharge dangerously for seventy years after the last Spanish soldier had been driven from South America. No wonder they were a little languid when it was over; the remarkable thing is that they should so soon have found fresh strength to begin building up their country.

They built fast—so fast that there is a tendency to imagine that everything imposing in Bogotá is of recent construction. But the beautiful national Capitol—one of the most *satisfying* buildings I know—was begun in the middle of the last century, and a good deal was accomplished during the masterful administration of Rafael Reyes, last of the caudillos. Nevertheless, because the crisis caused by the last World War came upon them when they had only had a few years in which to pull themselves together, modern Bogotá is largely the creation of twenty active years.

There are really two cities in the capital: Santa Fe and Bogotá. Santa Fe lives on in streets lined with old houses, in latticed windows and massive doors, in patios half seen through entrances still cobbled for the hooves of horses and mules, in the scores of churches, large and small, ornate or simple, that testify to colonial devotion. Bogotá—new Bogotá—is in the tall office buildings, the University City, the new quarters of scientific institutes, the National Library, the miles of modern suburbs—and, of course, the aqueduct.

The visitor can begin with the old or the new aspects, but in either case some of his first impressions will be gathered (and taken) at Police Headquarters. Every new arrival, unless traveling on a tourist visa, must obtain within a few days one of the identification cards without which no resident, Colombian or foreign, may legally exist. For this purpose he is invited to present himself at the Identification Bureau for what turns out to be more than a casual formality.

The mills of the Bureau grind slowly, but they grind almost to a powder. No one has ever known so much about me as lies recorded in meticulous copperplate in the archives of Bogotá, and the knowledge extends to my English grandfather and my half brother now resident in Ireland. As for my fingerprints,

they have been amassed wholesale; if each print is counted separately—and that is how they are taken—the total is staggering, and not all the perfumes of Araby could sweeten those little hands when it was over. But the most careful part is the description. Here there is none of that slipshod passport business: nose, regular; hair, brown; mouth, medium. Alternately peering and inscribing in faultless script, the clerk defines your most cherished features in unflattering detail. He has no illusions, and leaves you none.

It must be extremely difficult to get lost in Colombia, or even temporarily mislaid.

The plan of Bogotá is long and narrow, corresponding very nearly in shape and area to the island of Manhattan. Like Manhattan, its growth has been northward; it is the southern end that was colonial Santa Fe, and which, only a little enlarged, held the city until the close of the nineteenth century. Checked by the sudden bulk of the Cordillera on the east, the old town ended on the west with “the house of the divorced women” and the orphanage; its nerve center was the Plaza Mayor (now Plaza Bolívar), laid out to proportions that even today are immense. Celebrations, processions, demonstrations; executions and *corridos*; markets and maneuvers—the square has seen them all. Here Gonzalo Jiménez de Quesada founded the City of the Holy Faith in 1538, and Father Las Casas said the first mass in the little straw church that stood in place of the Cathedral. Here the people flocked to demand from the deaf and feeble Viceroy Amar y Borbón the open *cabildo* that marked the first step in the Revolution. Where now the fountains play in colored lights, Morillo set up gallows for the patriots; where the taxis stand, Camilo Torres was first shot, then hanged, and then beheaded—death piled on death and shame on shame in a vain hope that the revolt he fathered would die with him. Bolívar, galloping ahead of his troops after the victory of Boyacá, was welcomed here with delirious acclaim. His statue stands facing the Capitol; one hand holds a lowered sword, the other grasps the Constitution. The pose is that of a fencer.

Nearly all of Bogotá's hundred churches are monuments to colonial piety, when the scanty population built temple after

GOVERNMENT
BUILDING, CALI



NEW STREETS
IN OLD BOGOTA

PHOTO ALLEN



temple and convent next to convent in architectural devotion. There are twelve major churches in the Calle Real alone, nine of them founded before 1585. Some of them are almost unbearably ornate, but many are memorable for some special feature: the ornate reliefs and mudéjar ceiling of San Francisco; the intricately wrought walnut altars of La Tercera; the time-gentled baroque, all soft gold on deep blue and turquoise and red, of San Ignacio; El Sagrario, for whose wealth of tortoise shell and precious inlay and fine marbles a devout Santafereno gave all his fortune. The Cathedral, though finely proportioned, has (perhaps by contrast with so much overluxuriance) a chilly effect, enhanced by institutional benches severely lettered "For Men," "For Women." It misses the atmosphere that must have graced its little stone predecessor, gone these hundred and forty years, where angels played the organ and a dead archbishop rose again to wreak vengeance for posthumous wrong. Others of Bogotá's galaxy of churches stick in the memory chiefly for anecdotal reasons: Las Aguas, which kept a portrait of the rash girl who boasted "Not even the Virgin of the Waters has hair like mine!" and felt her curls turn instantly to snakes; La Concepción, where three blows are heard from the crypt before a nun must die; Chapinero, whose tower persists in falling because it was erected with tainted money. But if it were possible to visit just one church in Bogotá, that would have to be La Veracruz.

La Veracruz was built, smaller and far simpler than it is now, when the Conquistadores were still young; before its high altar the first bride in Santa Fe said her vows; Quesada was buried under its nave. It was from La Veracruz that the Brothers went out to carry the Cross of the Holy Agony before patriots on their way to execution, and to it they brought back the mutilated bodies for burial. Seventy of Morillo's victims lie under its pavement; Caldas, who was killed in the little square before the church, was buried there, and Camilo Torres, and Rodríguez Torices, who as youthful dictator of Cartagena gave unstinted support to Bolívar when the Liberator was young and untried.

Santa Fe was never rich as European cities were rich. Once the Chibcha gold was gone, the only abundance was land, and not even the greatest cattle owner could dispose of much money

when beef sold ten pounds for a nickel. The Santaferenos did not build palaces; archbishops and viceroys often lived in houses that seem almost rustic. There were some dwellings, however, that had spaciousness and a kind of simple elegance. One was the mansion of the Marqués de San Jorge, where don Jorge Tadeo Lozano, colleague of Mutis and first President of the free State of Cundinamarca, gave "the finest balls in Bogotá." Closed by doors high enough to give ample space for the tallest man on horseback to enter, it drowns in gentle decay just where the ground begins to slope toward the mountains. In the patio, sitting in the sun beside the wellhead, one can usually find a little old woman, incredibly wrinkled, but with eyes that are brilliant and laughing still. She could tell of the days when history was alive and present, but all she says is: "A hundred and six years old, that's what I am. A hundred and six years old." The Ramírez house, just across from the "puerta falsa" of the Cathedral, is different; kept and furnished now as in its colonial heyday, it is a jewel of a house, with carved doors rubbed to a dark gloss, and a musicians' gallery screened with wood cut in lacy filigree, and on the landing of the wide shallow staircase a holy niche where candles were first lit centuries ago.

Most magnificent of all the old mansions is the sixteenth-century palace of San Carlos, now the Ministry of Foreign Relations. It was here that Bolívar stayed in the sad and difficult days of 1828; a tablet marks the window from which he leaped to safety on that black night in September, while Manuela Saenz, the best beloved, parleyed with his would-be assassins at the door. Other public offices occupy less congruous quarters: the Highway Commission is in the grand salon of the 1550 college of Santo Tomás; the Ministry of Education overflows the house in which the last Spanish soldiers vainly barricaded themselves after Boyacá, and takes in the ancient chapel of Our Lady of Light. It has been suggested that the old Mint should be adapted to house the Museum, and certainly something should be done to that end; the present arrangement leaves everything to be desired.

There is enough good stuff in the National Museum to form the nucleus of an exhibit of more than national interest. The

groundwork of an aboriginal section is already there: mummies from Tunja, squat deities from San Agustín, some pre-Columbian pottery, guacos from ancient graves, a really superb many-colored feather carpet in a strangely Persian design of a growing tree with birds and flowers, surrounded by an ornamental border. The contemporary Indian section could start with the interesting but unidentified objects—clothes, weapons, ornaments and utensils—that are now dumped in a dark back room. Relics of the past and examples of the present are both relatively easy to come by in Colombia, to say nothing of the whole field of models and reproductions that could make vivid to stay-at-homes such things as the Tairona ruins and the Inzá tombs, and fix for future generations aboriginal types and costumes that may not long endure. The endless series of wooden portraits that now make up the bulk of the exhibits, although they have an innocently macabre charm, could be kept separately; their interest is chiefly sentimental, though I love one of Policarpa Salavarrieta, the gallant seamstress who was executed for her patriotic activities and who died in splendid defiance. It shows a thin-faced, slant-eyed girl, a Mona Lisa but more honest; it would be pleasant to know “La Pola” really looked so.

The center of administration and business of old Santa Fe is still that of new Bogotá, but no Santaferense would recognize it. Massive skyscrapers—the sky is nearer in Bogotá than it is in New York—form the “financial district,” asphalt has replaced cobblestones, traffic is intense and parking space hard to find. The Río San Francisco no longer cuts it from east to west, but flows in underground tubes. The thatched ranchos and decrepit houses, the *chicherías* where could be bought liquor in which dead men’s bones had been dissolved as an aphrodisiac, the mill where Dr. Russi and his brigands once used to meet—all these have given way to a wide avenue and up-to-date office buildings. The Río San Francisco was smelly, but picturesque; doubtless the air is sweeter now that its catch-all course is covered over, but I confess to a sentimental wish that the little torrent could have been left, and with it the convent, built in 1554, that housed the departmental government

until a big new building, in impressive classico-official style, took its place twenty years or so ago.

And yet a great deal has been left untouched—perhaps too much, for if one regrets the convent, one could do nicely without some of the cluttering houses whose insignificance has been allowed to cramp the modern plan. Tall banks and office buildings stare at each other across streets too narrow for two-way traffic; new construction crowds the ancient churches; handsome red-and-silver streetcars, decorated with floral wreaths en route to the cemetery, threaten pedestrians along the sidewalks. This sometimes upsets the Latin usage whereby a gentleman always walks on a lady's left.

"To take the outside of the pavement," observed my escort on one occasion, as he moved to the unorthodox side, "is not a gesture of politeness. It is an act of courage."

European visitors to the United States are informed on most aspects of the country, but they invariably find two sources of amazement. One is the easy way we take life, particularly business life; accustomed to finding people in their offices at seven or eight o'clock in the evening, on Saturdays and even perhaps on Sundays, it seems to them that we have a positively Oriental leisure.

"It takes forever to get anything done!" they wail, in man-bites-dog despair.

The other surprise, for which the movies have ill prepared them, is to discover that our suburbs are noticeably lacking in the ultra-modern architecture that is now quite common in Europe. We are a new people, and we love reminder of the too-brief past; we like our five rooms and bath built in the style of a colonial mansion and furnished with as near antiques as we can get. They, who are soaked in the past, throw themselves on new forms with the fervid conviction of the convert. The same holds good for Colombians, and in Bogotá the bent is reflected in miles of recently built suburbs, where thousands of brick or stucco villas line wide avenues or newly sodded squares from Tiesaquillo to Chapinero. (The hillsides close behind the city, with their groves of giant eucalyptus and their superb panorama, are left to ill-famed *barrios* like La Perseverancia.)

The insides are more modern than the outsides; I cannot answer for all of them, but those I know are much given to natural wood paneling and inset cabinets, to horizontal lines, plain colors and low-built furniture. Some remind one irresistibly of the illustrations in the magazines vulgarly known as super-slicks, where interiors of studied perfection are shown with a deceptive air of nonchalance.

"Public" architecture of the last thirty years is of two types: the massive, consciously important style that is pre-1925, and the smooth, curve-and-angle simplicity of the last ten years or so. To this second, geometric order belong the Radium Institute, the Geographical Institute, the cultural theater and the National Library. The Library has just been finished; not only is it the last word in such things from its children's reading rooms to its specially designed stacks, but it is the happy owner of three hundred incunabula. Offices are also of two kinds. The greater number are unalluring, with an odd air of temporary quarters; the other sort, as usual, goes one step beyond normal modernity, and at times combines the decorator touch with functional utility in a way seldom seen outside the films. The two nicest offices are the director's room at the Library, with its restful use of fine woods and soft color, and the unpretentious sanctum of the Chief Executive, in the Presidential Palace. In both of these, parts of the walls are glass, from floor to ceiling; the Library office thus becomes part of its surrounding garden, while that of the President looks out airily over a jumble of red-tiled roofs, belfreys and church domes to the Cordillera and the plain.

Trying to describe Bogotá is like trying to pack a very large collection of mismatched clothes into a very small suitcase. Quite early in the struggle you realize that it can't be done—but there are those reproachful piles, each piece too good to leave behind. The strain of deciding which to put back in the cupboard has been known to make people give up the whole trip and stay at home with an aspirin. After looking at my notes, which might possibly fit into one of the heavier four-volume works, but never into a chapter, I have decided to leave out the things which are most like our things.

After all, there is no particular point in describing the Race

Course, the Polo Grounds—where so many of the players seem to be either Sampers or Santamarías—or the attractive Country Club, for they only differ from ours in setting. (There is, of course, a bull ring, which no doubt has the savor peculiar to Spanish countries, but I cannot do my duty by it, since I avoided it with care.) The same reasoning applies to other things that are extraordinarily important to the life of the city, but which one can imagine quite comfortably unaided. Into this group fall the sixty-one public hospitals and welfare organizations: the huge pergola-linked pavilions of the hospital of San Juan de Dios, the vacation colonies where uncouth and grimy youngsters are taught happiness and self-respect, the orphanages so model that aseptic *décor* is tempered by little green beds and flowered coverlets, the particularly touching Maternity Refuge, the Anti-Tuberculosis Committees—for these are like those we know. So, I suppose, is the new filtration plant, though its immaculate perfection, being perched on a shelf of the Cordillera, acquires a special character from the surroundings.

The splendid laboratory for yellow fever research, maintained jointly by the Colombian government and the Rockefeller Foundation, is rather different. There is a compact efficiency about it that is vaguely exciting, as smooth-working machines are exciting. The Foundation started work in Colombia in 1919, with a hookworm survey in tierra caliente; from its collaboration with the Ministry of Agriculture there grew the Bureau of Rural Sanitation under the Ministry of Health and Labor. Since 1934 interest has concentrated on yellow fever. Research has marched with seven-league boots; it is hard to realize that the cause of yellow fever (a filterable virus) was discovered only in 1927, that the first successful vaccination dates back only ten years, and that it is only since 1937 that a method has been evolved which makes general prevention possible. Wholesale vaccination has licked yellow fever in Colombia, but the patient work of the laboratory, and its field counterpart in Villavicencio, is not just for Colombia, but for the world. Eleven years ago science had not yet discovered that there were two kinds of yellow fever; as late as last year the carriers of the “jungle” variety were still unknown criminals at large. Today the car-

riers and their hosts have been identified, and it is the researchers in Colombia who tracked them down. That, however, must be another story—though I confess that the temptation to tell at once how five dozen eggs and a long-deceased Negro can be combined to immunize nine thousand people is almost overpowering.

There is one universal modern service that, although it is identical in conception to those common elsewhere, has in Bogotá a very special character, different even from others of its ilk in Colombia. This is the telephone system, and it is uniquely bad. In fact it is so bad that it can hardly be classed as an inefficient public service but must be considered more in the light of a phenomenon, like a tidal wave or—more accurately—an epidemic of sleeping sickness. The reason is quite simple: a three-pesos-a-month flat rate, stipulated in the contract, which the original English concessionaires were bright enough to pass on to an American company. The company illustrates its predicament every hour of the day; the authorities are concerned, but procrastinating; the public laughs and groans; the press fulminates—not quite fairly—in polished and poisonous prose; and a half a dozen telephone calls continue to be practically a life work.

Perhaps all the foregoing should have been in the past tense. Recently the stock has been taken over by a new group, and it may be that already the old order has changed; that telephoning is no longer a matter requiring the auxiliary installation of a comfortable chair and a good book. One thing is certain: the rates will go up.

Two great colleges were established in Santa Fe in the seventeenth century: San Bartolomé, entrusted to the Jesuits in 1605, and Nuestra Señora del Rosario, founded by the Dominicans in 1653. Both are still flourishing. With their respective universities—the Jesuit Javeriana and the Dominican Santo Tomás—they waged a long and bitter struggle for supremacy. El Rosario—where the great Mutis taught, among other revolutionarily scientific subjects, the dangerous theory that the earth revolves around the sun—had the first modern medical instruction; to San Bartolomé belongs the honor of the

first lectures in physics, three hundred years ago, a tradition maintained in a well-equipped laboratory and a fine observatory. Between them they have taught most of the men who figure large in Colombia's history.

It is a far cry from the colleges of the sixteen hundreds, with their courses in philosophy, theology and "cases of conscience" conducted in Latin, to the National University, and from the cloisters of Santo Tomás and the Javeriana to the new University City. This, still in process of construction, has had the rare advantage of being able to start from scratch, unhampered by the necessity of respectfully incorporating any pre-existent setup. Until the National University was created in 1936, the colleges of medicine, architecture, law and so forth were separate entities scattered here and there throughout the town; now that they are united, the University counts about 3,000 students. The new fifty-acre campus is laid out symmetrically in faculty buildings, playing fields, stadiums, dormitories, gardens and "services"—which in this case means laundries, restaurants, garages and the like. The shades of the great Archbishop-Viceroy Caballero y Góngora, of the men of the *Expedición Botánica*, and of Santander and Ospina, who also preferred science to cases of conscience, must hover contentedly about the schools of engineering and tropical diseases, the institutes of botany, mineralogy, zoology and veterinary medicine, which are such admirable examples of the application of science to local needs.

The University City is a visible symbol of modernity, beside which the comfortable red brick buildings of the *Gimnasio Moderno* seem quietly conventional. Actually, the *Gimnasio* was a precedent-shattering innovation, a thoroughly upsetting stone thrown into stagnant educational waters, whose eddies have widened far beyond the borders of Colombia. The methods were shockingly advanced, but the principles are as old as Socrates or Juvenal. The *Gimnasio*, proceeding on the principle that the twin supports of education are health and character, follows an academic line that Anatole France once summed up neatly in a paragraph ending: "Curiosity is keen only in happy minds. To digest knowledge one must have devoured it with appetite."

Not unsurprisingly, there are few art treasures, properly so called, in Bogotá. For Creole means, old masters came too dear even when they were contemporary; viceroys, whose purses might have run to such refinements, did not take valuables of this kind with them for a few years' official stay in the New Realm, and the paintings listed in the episcopal inventory have nearly all vanished who knows where. After the Independence, what little means and thought could be saved for art from the perfervid politics of the times suffered the blight peculiar to the nineteenth century. Oleographs, stiff and alarming portraits, "The Stag at Eve," "Antony and Cleopatra," "First Communion," and "Caesar Crossing the Rubicon" about filled the bill.

There are, however, a few good canvases, and there may well be more, as yet unknown. Some years ago a lady discovered herself the owner of a supposed Raffaello; Santa Barbara has a canvas suspected of being an El Greco; in the Archbishop's chapel there is a proven Murillo and a Rubens; the Jesuits own a fine small Christ by Ribera and a Madonna attributed to Guido Reni. The innumerable works of the industrious Santafereno painter Vásquez Arce y Ceballos, whose output was truly astounding, are distributed through a great number of churches, but their right to the title of masterpiece is doubtful. There is, of course, the extraordinary jeweled monstrosity of San Bartolomé, but it is invisible; the golden statue of the Virgin—set with 1,538 diamonds, 1,295 emeralds, 372 pearls, 609 amethysts and a profusion of other stones—which I found described in an old book, seems to have disappeared without a trace.

Perhaps, since the criterion of art is not permanence, one should consider as such the flower arrangements any Bogotano florist can turn out with unmatched skill. The materials are varied and most of them are incredibly cheap—orchids at \$1.20 a dozen will serve as an example—and never, in any city in the world, have I seen more beautifully composed baskets. These, at least, are authentic masterpieces.

If you drive out from Bogotá a little way across the Sabana on the road to Fusagasugá, and then turn right to follow the

river through a winding gorge where the slopes are stained with surface coal (part of the estimated six billion tons of Cundinamarca and Boyacá), you will come after twenty miles or so to the falls of Tequendama. The narrow valley opens suddenly in a green amphitheater whose center is a sheer-walled crescent pit, and here the Río Bogotá pours over the cliff in a vertical sheet of white water 450 feet high. Only half of it can be clearly seen; the rest is lost in upsurging clouds of spray and mist.

This is the miracle Bochica worked when Chibchacum sent the flood on the Sabana. The river gorge is where he leaned down from the rainbow and struck at the rocks with his golden wand; the falls are the salvation he brought to the half-drowned Chibchas. Here Hunsahúa, the outcast prince of Tunja, came with his sister-wife after she had given birth to the stone of guilt. The tired lovers stood and looked over the precipice, and then taking each other by the hand, leaped together into the smoking emptiness below; the two stones one sees just at the edge are those the pitiful gods set there, in memory. Many a disconsolate soul has followed their example; Tequendama is a favorite spot for suicides, who can thus leave the world in a little borrowed majesty, without the shame of unconsecrated burial. The small white Madonna on the bank has looked sorrowfully on generations of them, but last year she had a respite; the rains failed, and there was no smooth rush of water slipping over the brink to draw unhappy people with it. Perhaps they followed the cynical advice I saw in a Bogotá paper, which, in commenting on the number of gruesome suicides in the city, suggested that it would be easier, and conveniently cheap, to buy some cyanide at the corner store.

It is inevitable, I suppose, that the miracle of Bochica should be now harnessed to supply electricity for factories and suburban villas. The name of the Messenger of God has been given to the café built on the lip of the abyss.

The Quinta de Bolívar is a rambling house on the hilly outskirts of Bogotá, where the Liberator lived for a few tranquil months before sickness and hostility drove him from Cundinamarca. With him was Manuela Saenz, the wild and brilliant woman who six years before had thrown her cap over the mill

for him with a flourish. Manuela was also Mrs. Thorne, but it would be silly to call her by the name of her English doctor-husband, so good, so devoted and so predestined to disaster. "Sir, you are excellent, you are inimitable," wrote Manuela when he begged her to come back, "in heaven you and I will marry again, but not on earth—for as a man, you are somewhat heavy." Poor Dr. Thorne! Either Manuela was fascinating beyond all mortal women, or he was constant beyond all hapless men, for although she declared herself "more honored in being the mistress of General Bolívar than the wife of any other man alive," he continued to love her uncritically, and willed her his estate when he died. Characteristically, she refused it.

The Quinta is without style, merely a one-story construction with small rooms darkened by verandas and close-growing trees, yet no one can visit it quite unmoved. Its simple intimacy has far more meaning than the pompous conventionalism of an official residence could convey; the tiny bedroom, opening to the garden, the shelves with boxes holding earth from all the battlefields of the Revolution, the gloomy little salon are touching even to a stranger. The visitors are mostly dark, humble folk in ruanas and alpargatas, who move quietly and speak in the low tones of reverence. The garden is lovely—a tangled, casual garden that slopes steeply behind the house. Happily, the Bogotanos have not prettied the Quinta into self-consciousness; it is taken care of, but it is left itself.

If one were to compress all the impressions of Bogotá into one, the first sum would be its likeness to some city in Europe. There are a hundred similarities, most of them based on the dovetailing of old and new: narrow calles that turn into wide boulevards, ancient churches cheek by jowl with hotels and cinemas, streets that in a single block can hold stone-and-mortar examples of four hundred years of life. Then too, there is the somber dress of rich and poor alike, which, oddly, is so much more characteristic of southern Europe than of the New World; the frequent green squares, each with its heroic statue; the small dark shops and the busy market, the tiled roofs and walled gardens. The Colon Theater is pure Europe, with its tier on tier of richly decorated boxes. One misses the sidewalk

cafés, but the masculine noonday crowd, milling slowly between the Calle 12 and the Calle 15, is entirely familiar. I could name half a dozen European counterparts of that particular hive of male gossip, the corner so aptly named "Arranca plumas."

The impression is deepened by the noises, which are many and insistent. They are also very nearly continuous. The clang of church bells, the many-toned chorus of automobile horns (one, I could never find out which, used to play "East Side, West Side"), the street cries are all reminders of fifty meridional cities. Listen closely, however, and the most persistent sound has a cadence all its own. This is the cry of the lottery vendors, a minor chant ending in a kind of melodious howl:

"Loterí-i-a-a-a! Manizales para hoy!"

I could hear it after twenty years in Inner Mongolia, and it would instantly take me back to Bogotá.

The master impression is not, after all, quite true. It will not stand up to close inspection. The somber dress includes ruanas, the squares are green with trees Europe never knew. The market sells things no old world town could guess: vegetables like arracacha and yuca and *cubio*; balú bean and *hibia*; fruits like curuba and *chirimoya* and *papaya*. There are pack saddles and *fique* cord, knotted hammocks, thick rugs to put *over* the saddle (very useful on day-long rides) and "Panama" hats. The near-by shops sell better hats, better ruanas and the huge, all-enveloping capes called *bayetones*. These last are black, lined with scarlet; worn with an air, they are dashing beyond description. I once thought of bringing one of these exotic garments to New York, where, romance in every fold, it would be a symbol of Spain in the Andes. The price was rather high.

"Dear?" protested the shopkeeper in a hurt voice. "But, señora, thirty pesos is very cheap. They are guaranteed genuine English!"

Perhaps I should have bought it after all. The bayetones may be made in a foggy Midlands city, but they are only at home in the Sabana, flung carelessly in a swagger of vermilion over a Colombian shoulder.

The old houses in the quiet cobbled streets south and east of the Plaza Bolívar are not European either. (If you are lucky,

you may be asked to one of these for a *té Santaferense*, which is a delightful combination of much good conversation and a very, very high six o'clock tea.) Look down from the belvedere on the Paseo Bolívar, the road that winds up through the Parque Nacional past the funicular station and across the slopes above the city—better still, take the funicular itself, which crawls up the face of the mountain like a sleepy fly to the very top of Monserrate. There is a votive church just on the crest, lit at night by floods to glow like an icon high above the town, but the beauty of Monserrate is the view. At your feet, clinging as if for strength to the Cordillera, are the warm terra-cotta roofs of Bogotá, reaching for ten miles from north to south. Beyond them is the Sabana, lightly scrawled with roads, dotted with farms. If the season is winter, the plain will be vivid green, patched with standing water and the gleam of full rivers; in summer, it is a shaded expanse of tan and ochre and raw sienna; always, it is streaked with the dark exclamation points of eucalyptus. Right and left, the mountains lie in descending ridges; far to the west, beyond a low line of peaks, you may glimpse the incredible snows of Tolima.

No, Santa Fe de Bogotá is not a modified version of a European city, though its family tree has its roots in Spain and was pruned by Paris. It is Bogotá, itself, which is as it should be.

CHAPTER XXXI

Even Neighbors Can Be Friends

WHAT DO THEY THINK OF US DOWN THERE?" is a question asked more often than it used to be about the countries below the Río Grande. "What about our trade? What about foreign penetration? What about debts? What about United States' investments?" Also, in the words of one editor, "Are we considered suckers, wolves or just plain dumb?"

There are twenty republics in the other Americas, all different. Their resources, necessities, problems and possibilities vary wildly, and so does their attitude toward the United States. No blanket statement can cover them all. By and large, the attitude of the majority toward the individual *americano del norte*—unless he falls foul of their rigid standards of social conduct—is one of liking; toward the United States as an entity it might be described as admiration mingled with distrust. This is tempered by varying degrees of sympathy, irritation, understanding and somewhat acrid humor, according to place, time and circumstance. The admiration is more for our material achievements and ability to get what we want than for our spiritual quality; the mistrust is not so much opposed to it as derived from it. The Good Neighbor is no longer a wolf in Latin American eyes, but he bears a haunting resemblance to those shepherd dogs in whom the primitive ancestor is uncomfortably near.

Most of us find the admiration part of this mixture natural enough, but we are pained, not to say indignant, that anyone should regard us with suspicion. "Who, us?" we say, honestly bewildered that anyone should doubt the motives and intentions

of the United States—so obviously altruistic, so crystal clear. Why, look what we've done for them!

We have done a great deal for them—not, of course, out of irrational altruism, without hope of return, but with considerable energy and efficiency. We have developed resources they were incapable of exploiting, expended money that increased their national wealth, “modernized” and constructed and organized. In certain cases, we have firmly put their houses in order for them. We have given them money, at a mere 7 or 8 per cent; and they haven't paid it back. We have told them that they are all our neighbors, even the ones that are five thousand miles away—ours and no one's else. We welcome them into the glorious communion of democracies, including such as enjoy an all-wool autocracy. We protected them when they were young and unsure, and we leave no doubt that we intend to go on doing so.

Were you ever, as a child, entrusted to the care of a strong-minded maiden aunt? An aunt who wished you well, and guided your sometimes erring footsteps in the way they should go? Who did things for you, and gave you advice? Who had preconceived notions about washing behind ears and combing hair? Who wouldn't let the bad boys black your little eyes (though she was not averse to applying a hairbrush where it would do most good), and told you never to play ball with those awful Schmidt children or let the Vianelli youngsters into the yard? Well, maybe Auntie knew best, but you felt the hellion rising in you every time she tried to impress the fact upon you—particularly when you outgrew short pants.

The United States feels that only willful perversity can explain the coyness of South American countries before its fond advances. It has been in the position of an affluent and self-confident executive who wishes to take under his wing an attractive young thing from the outer office: she will and she won't, and all the dinners and theater tickets and hopeful attentions end with a good-night kiss at the door. This has been partly due to the wariness of the weak with regard to the too-adjacent strong, partly to a difference in background and temperament and partly to an inconveniently retentive memory.

The twenty countries to the south of us are like a large family

—very different from one another, very individualistic, capable of jealousy, quarrels and skullduggery among themselves, but with a strong family feeling when it comes to any shoving around by outsiders. And this is the nub of the matter—the United States is an outsider. However much we talk of hemispheric solidarity, common ideals and oneness of spirit, we are for them a foreign nation. Not so foreign, perhaps, as Japan, but on the other hand, nearer, more powerful and more pervasive.

But surely, it will be objected, no one could imagine we would be guilty of shoving? This is where the memory part comes in. What with manifest destiny and ineluctable necessity and the greatest good for the greatest number and one thing and another, we have used our elbows to considerable purpose, and that fairly recently. Texas and the Mexican War are nearly a century old, and Walker in Nicaragua dates back eighty-seven years, but it is not yet thirty-eight years since Theodore Roosevelt, in his own words, “took the Canal Zone.” It is only sixteen years since we ended our far from gentle occupation of Santo Domingo; only seven since we got out of Nicaragua, where (with a two-year break) we had been imposing a minority government by force of arms ever since 1912. It was only in 1934 that the last of our naval forces left Haiti, after running that country for nearly nineteen years.

There is no doubt whatever that in every case in which the United States intervened, either taking over completely or setting up a puppet government backed by watchful marines and “advised” by American appointees, the situation *ante* was a thorough mess. It is equally beyond question that in each case the occupied country was left in far better state when the term ended. Communications, hygiene, finances were put in good condition; local employees were trained to efficiency. Unfortunately, the way of the benefactor is even harder than that of the transgressor. And the benefacted had a persistent idea that behind these trailing clouds of altruism was *el peligro Yanqui*—the Yankee peril. Our methods of persuasion in the Philippines, where the “little brown brothers” showed a regrettable aversion to being purchased, had been watched attentively by countries who felt that they were too far from the

Nordic type and too weak themselves to be able to entirely relax; every time the marines (for some reason regarded by the American public not as part of our fighting forces, but as something bland, almost symbolic, to which there could be no real objection) landed on foreign soil, they huddled together and gazed northward like startled deer. And then there were those warships, so apt in their casual appearances in Latin American ports, and that tender protection with which the government of the Colossus of the North watched over American business enterprise.

The Monroe Doctrine, at first welcomed, came to be regarded by the other Americas much as a nervous politician regards an attractively presented gift package from whose unexplored depths there sounds a loud and regular tick. It may contain only a handsome gilded alarm clock, but he handles it with suspicious care. It became apparent that the isolationist and protective Doctrine, if it set up a stop sign on east-bound aggression, left a green light for that from north to south, and statements made by representative North Americans (why is there no handy distinguishing name for the people of the United States?), carrying a sting at both ends, were anything but reassuring. Typical of the Kiplingesque utterances of the times, and a total mess viewed from any angle, was Taft's "the hemisphere is ours *de facto*, as already, by virtue of racial superiority, it is ours *de jure*"—surely the ultimate in blatant ineptitude. And so the saying arose that Monroe's "two sphere" declaration did not mean America for the Americans, but America for the North Americans.

The happily christened Good Neighbor policy has modified and softened this opinion. It has not eliminated the fundamentals: Latins are realistic to the point of cynicism, and they do not believe that the aims and intentions of the United States, however suavely presented, have really altered in content. But the attitude toward indirect domination by the Colossus of the North is changing from one of anxious resentment to one of acceptance. In at least one case, that of Colombia, the feeling goes beyond regretful resignation to something warmer and more positive.

Colombia is our closest neighbor in the southern continent—

which means that from Washington or New York it is about as far in travel time as Europe. This seems to stretch neighborhood a bit, but compared to Perú (12 days by boat or 3 by plane), Chile (18 days by boat or 4 by plane), or Argentina (17 days by boat or 5 by plane), it is practically next door. The good will of all the other American republics means much to us, but that of Colombia matters in a special degree; not only do we have very large interests in the country, but its position, straddling the two seas, gives it a peculiar strategic importance. On either side of the Isthmus the line of its ocean frontier extends in a long arc; figures about Latin America do not always have the grim finality that takes the element of surprise and adventure from so much statistical research, but the *Anuario de Estadística* establishes that there are more than 900 miles of Colombian coast on one side of the Panama Canal and nearly 1,100 on the other.

Happily, Colombia is genuinely friendly toward the United States. It would be too much to say that all of the Colombians like us all of the time, but most of them like us most of the time, which in international relations is saying a great deal these days. It means more than the mere statement holds, for of all the South American countries Colombia has had the strongest dose of *el imperialismo Yanqui*. It is past history now, buried nineteen years ago with a treaty at its head and a cash indemnity planted on the grave. If it is briefly resurrected here, it is in order that a generation that has forgotten, if it ever knew, the facts will realize just what this specter is that from time to time stalks across the Pan-American stage crying Beware!

What would we do if Russia, say, encouraged a revolution in Alaska, prevented by force our troops from entering to deal with it, recognized overnight the independent Republic of Alaska, and obtained within a few days concessions and territorial rights in the new "nation" that we had hesitated to grant on her terms before? The question is absurd. Yet that is exactly what we did to Colombia in 1903, for Panamá was part of the Republic of Colombia. The difference lies in the fact that Colombia (whose sovereignty and integrity we had guaranteed) was in no condition to fight us, and we knew it.

After the World War of 1914-18, when South America had acquired an economic importance for us far beyond anything we had dreamed in pre-war years, we paid Colombia \$25,000,000 in reparation. But the damage was done. For years anyone who pointed out our good qualities was met with one damning word: "Panamá," and every time we intervened in the occasionally malodorous internal affairs of small but presumably independent states beyond our borders, a tremor ran from Laredo to Cape Horn.

This is the "never-ending wrong" that a certain opposition group in Colombia still brings into editorial and parliamentary discussion when attacking the "pro-Yankee" policies of the Administration. It is the concrete if slightly outmoded argument of those who "view with alarm" the gentle but inexorable southward push of the United States, and who profess to believe that a further get-together between Colombia and this country would have the alimentary completeness of co-operation between a kitten and a tiger. The majority of younger Colombians, however, and with them the Liberals (in power at present and by all signs due to remain so), look on the United States with favor. Even the less enthusiastic are without rancor, and say with the pretty maid in the song, "We must love someone, and it might as well be you."

A few weeks ago I heard a group of young Colombians discussing the political future. Their conversation perfectly expressed the kind of cynical, resigned and withal friendly attitude that is becoming more widespread among our nearest South American neighbors. The gist was this:

"Colombia is destined to revolve in the orbit of the United States. It is inevitable, a geographical compulsion. Now that the long dream of naval bases to the south has been realized, the Caribbean is a North American lake, and it would be absurd not to recognize the fact. What kind of sovereignty can be boasted by a country whose economic existence and freedom of movement is controlled by another? Better look realities in the face and make the best of them without obstructionism. We of the new generations have dismissed the bitterness of Panamá: the ends have, if not justified, at least condoned the means. But nothing indicates that the muscular

democracy to the north intends to embrace suddenly a self-denying, hands-off attitude. After all, it is only weak nations that are not imperialistic. We should be grateful for the velvet glove."

There are many reasons for Colombian friendliness, and they are not exclusively, or even predominantly, material ones. No nation is overcome with urgent loving kindness for another if the relationship is detrimental to national interests—not if they know it first. But even allowing for the "divine egoism" of patriotism, the other Americas are more sensible to the intangibles than our diplomacy has always realized. We could lend a billion dollars to Colombia without interest, and if our manner were dictatorial and patronizing it would get us nowhere, as far as sentiment is concerned, but in the doghouse. The Colombians, who had leisured, cultivated living before the Pilgrims came to Plymouth, long considered North America woefully lacking in culture and refinement; even today they still measure quality by what you are rather than by what you have, and their criteria are nearer those of pre-1914 Europe than those of post-1918 United States.

Our basic bond with Colombia is that of political beliefs.

In our anxiety to establish "hemispheric unity," we are inclined to talk as if from the Arctic Circle to Tierra del Fuego there were nothing but earnest, practicing democracies, differing neither in kind nor in degree, but only in size and latitude. Franklin Roosevelt declared that the Buenos Aires Conference of 1936 spoke "on behalf of all the democracies in the world to those nations who live otherwise." This passes lightly over so many *de facto* dictatorships that it leaves one a little dizzy. It is, of course, no business of ours what political system an independent foreign state shall elect to follow within its own borders, or what variations it may introduce in practice. There are those where conditions are such that a strong hand is both necessary and welcome.

If necessity can be invoked in the United States to justify a highly independent executive, and the indispensability of one man as that executive—in a country so rich that it prevents production and destroys commodities, and so safe that it has never learned enforced discretion—it is hardly to be wondered

at if less fortunate nations welcome a strong hand on the helm. We have been at some pains to impress other American republics with the desirability of single terms for presidents, even going so far as to embody it, rather oddly, in solemn treaties. It was not very successful; too many of them were poor, with small élites, large proletariats of mixed and sometimes incalculable blood, a high proportion of illiteracy, an economy based on abundant cheap labor, a tradition of violence, and among the intelligentsia a passion for politics rather than government—in which they are not unique. It would have been fatal to plunge these countries into democracy: baptism by immersion would not have saved them, it would have drowned them.

This is what Bolívar, the apostle of freedom, meant when he said, "It would be better for South America to adopt the Koran than the form of government of the United States"—by which he meant no reflection on our country. But in our anxious search for a tie that binds which cannot be found in blood, tradition, religion, customs, mental habit or social conditions, we cling obstinately to our vision of unity of political ideals and organization as the only possible common link. We say with Coué: "Every day and in every way Latin America is getting more and more democratic." We had better say with St. Augustine: "Credo quia absurdum." Democracy, whether it be the highest form of political development, a turn of the wheel in evolution or an expensive luxury, is not, or at any rate, not yet, everyone's meat.

All this being granted, the fact remains that Colombia (where presidents actually do change every four years), with her devotion to the Constitution, her free press, her liberal spirit and her forty years of peace, is a democratic country. Indeed, it is almost more; it has already been remarked that the 1932-36 administration of Alfonso López (who is slated for the Presidency again in 1942), though distinctly and to some foreign interests disquietingly nationalistic, had a marked affinity with the New Deal.

Another reason for Colombian friendliness is the increasing number of young people who come to the United States for at least a part of their education. True, there were only fifty-four students from Colombia enrolled in our colleges in 1938-39, but

that is more than there were from any other American country below Panamá. Their influence is far larger than the actual figures would indicate; a very small group of people can have considerable impact in a country of nine million inhabitants in which the "governing class" is limited and 50 per cent of the population is illiterate.

The United States has not, in the past, had any appreciable appeal to Latin Americans as a fount of education. It cost more to go to college in the States than could easily be afforded; the system was radically different; law—a preferred subject—was little help to them in their own countries, whereas law in France or Italy ran parallel; they were not yet particularly interested in technical instruction; they often found a social atmosphere that made the resented *de haut en bas* attitude of Spain to the Creoles seem almost effusive. But beyond these retail considerations was the fundamental fact that until the last war the cultural tide of South America ran east and west, not north and south.

To a large extent it still does. It is not surprising that this should be so; it is only surprising that we should be reluctant to realize it. History, traditions, religion, language, customs—all draw the Latin American countries to Europe rather than to North America; the dominating strain is Iberian, the paramount character that of the Peninsula. Brazil, larger than all of the United States together, was Portuguese in varying forms for three hundred and eighty-eight years—half a century longer than the whole span of our history; the nine other republics of the southern continent were colonized and ruled by Spain for nearly three and a half centuries. In Colombia there was no great influx of differing free races as there was in North America; after the middle of the sixteenth century Spain forbade immigration other than Spanish (African slaves did not count), and in the hundred and sixteen years since independence was won, the number of foreign settlers has been negligible.

For the last hundred and fifty years one foreign country has modified, but not changed, the thought and habit of Latin America: France. French literature, French philosophy, French liberalism, French law, French *esprit* and French fashions have molded and colored them. But the substance remains the same,

and the influence was not of the New World but of the old: European, and Latin European at that. Had France ever attempted to influence them by advertised design—the modern method—there would have been an immediate revulsion of feeling; had she tried to direct their internal administration of affairs, the result would have been violent resistance. History shows that when their sensitive ears hear the call, South Americans fight with obstinacy, not to say enthusiasm, without any consideration of the odds. While giving thanks for ingrained intolerance of foreign encroachment, we must keep in mind that Tío Sam is not exempt from its workings.

It would be hard to imagine a less consoling situation than that in which Colombia found herself at the beginning of the present century, when the effects of the long struggle between irreconcilable radicals and unyielding conservatives reached its peak. Loss of life in the Thousand Days had been so great that a macabre saying was coined: “los chulos comían de capitán para arriba”—the vultures only ate from captains up. Property was destroyed, livestock slaughtered, land untilled. The government income was reduced to \$2,370,000. Peace had hardly been established when the Isthmus was stripped from her, and the United States refused to arbitrate, indemnify or even discuss the matter. Railroads were limited to a few short and disconnected routes; highways were not even a gleam in P. W. D. eyes. War, poverty and lack of preventive or educational measures were shockingly reflected in the public health; the mass of the people was illiterate and apathetic; the upper classes were exhausted, impoverished and depressed.

All this was less than forty years ago, and these forty years have been punctuated by the World War of 1914-18, the well-known depression and now by the conflagration in Europe, which reaches out to derange Colombian economy. Yet from the pit of 1903, the country has pulled itself up to a new order. The population has doubled, the Government income has increased forty times. López de Mesa has calculated that the national wealth in 1933 (“deflation period”) was $33\frac{1}{3}$ per cent greater than in 1923 (pre-inflation), or 4 billion pesos instead of 3 billion. And 1933 is a long time ago in the story of modern Colombia.

A great deal of the industrial development and public works, the education and hygiene, could not have been accomplished—not, at least, in anything approaching a comparable period of time—without the aid of foreign loans and of direct foreign investment and technical knowledge. Direct investment has, as a rule, been good business for the entrepreneurs, but it has also been good for Colombia, and Colombia (though not without reservations) realizes the fact.

Colombians are not hostile to United States enterprise. But they are a little upset when they think of its extent. Most of them freely recognize its merits and advantages; many of them are almost too ready to believe that without foreign counsel and capital nothing of note can be carried out successfully. Some of them, however, mutter, "We have sold ourselves to the Yanquis." When we try to scare them about German infiltration, they grin derisively and say, in effect, "Oh, yeah? What about the *penetración estadounidense*?"

"You are over our country like an octopus," these malcontents go on, "a benevolent octopus, perhaps, inspired by the kindest sentiments, an able and intelligent octopus, but a very embracing one."

"You produce and export all of our petroleum, the greater part of our platinum, 90 per cent of our bananas. You have gold mines, power plants, public utilities; you build roads and plants, you operate ports. Thirty-three per cent of our merchandise export is made by you; 90 per cent of what is left—coffee—is largely dependent on New York prices. Two of your steamship lines have a monopoly of transportation to the United States. You owned 83 per cent of our 'German' air service, and will own 41 per cent of the reorganized national system. Over half our total foreign trade is with the United States. You have naval, military and air missions stationed in Bogotá. Penetration? Why, we're a dependency."

There are less than 35,000 foreigners residing in Colombia, excluding nationals of bordering countries (Venezuela, Brazil, Ecuador and Perú). Of these about 5,000 are Germans. This includes pre-Hitler, anti-Hitler, pro-Hitler and Jews. Perhaps 2,000 of them are adult males; they are mostly importers and exporters, farmers, and shopkeepers. Seventeen non-Jewish

German-born men and women were naturalized during 1938 and 1939; four of them came to the country after 1930, two of them were nuns. The Colombians, almost unanimously, declare that they are anti-Nazi but pro-Germans—in the individual plural. This, being interpreted, means that they condemn aggression, invasion and alien dominance with the earnestness of a doubting wife establishing the obloquy of extra-connubial adventure, but that they are appreciative of the advantages of German trade and of the contribution made to the country by German residents. One representative Colombian put it to me quite simply.

“Of course we are not hostile to Germans as we know them,” he said. “Why should we be? We have never had anything unpleasant with or from them. We have an inborn aversion to dictatorship, true; but only very powerful nations can feel a call to rearrange other peoples’ affairs for them—and Colombia is not in that class.”

What Colombia—who receives without prejudice Communists, Nazis, Jews and Levantines, provided they are solvent, sound in mind and limb, have no police record and abstain from political activity, and who welcomed twenty-five Spanish “red” intellectuals as permanent residents in one sole week—thinks of the whole question has been recently stated by the President of the Republic:

“Scattered among more than nine million Colombians are fewer than fifty thousand foreigners. . . . Among these foreigners there are some fourteen or fifteen thousand Venezuelans and Ecuadorians who reside in the bordering regions, as on the other side of these borders are residing numerous Colombians, and half of the total number of those foreigners are natives of the New World. . . .

“Neither are there in near-by regions, as is the case in some other countries, strong groups of European colonies that may exert influence on Colombia. All these foreigners live in diverse regions of Colombia and their concentrations never have aroused suspicion.

“This situation permits us to read with tranquil curiosity the exciting publications about fifth columns and to continue to offer foreigners who have come to our land seeking tran-

quillity for their lives and a propitious field for their business activities a cordial hospitality that does not exclude the necessary watchfulness and which could end only by their opposition and resistance to the Colombian laws."

Would Colombia be more democratic, more "American," if she were less tolerant? Would she show a higher reach in human values, a finer spiritual development, if she cultivated racial prejudice and national antipathies and applied them to the individual?

Our large stake in Colombia—large compared to the country—can be a blessing or a curse; it can make us warmer friends or bitter enemies. It does not entirely depend on governmental policies; the small-change, individual factor of personal contacts is enormously important. Every businessman, every construction boss, every commercial traveler or agent is an unofficial ambassador, whether he realizes it or not. He represents the United States, and so do such of his sisters and his cousins and his aunts as may accompany him.

People who do not travel beyond their own bailiwick are usually surprised to learn the odd opinions cherished about them by other nations. (People who do travel are surprised at nothing.) After all, it is the things that protrude most in newspapers, magazines and films which today give the picture of one country to another. What do you suppose the effect on an untraveled Colombian would be of seeing in rapid succession: "Tobacco Road," "The Women," "The Grapes of Wrath," and "Public Enemy No. 1"?—or, as far as that goes, of reading one issue of a good juicy tabloid? If Latin America seems to many North Americans all debts and revolutions, seasoned with tangos combining passionate calisthenics and tropic languor in a way no Argentino would approve, the United States might well seem all gangsters and bosses, seasoned with Hollywood. If Latin Americans are pictured as all either fantastically rich hacendados or peons suffering in inarticulate impotence, North Americans might be seen as emperorlike captains of industry or relievers. If their manners appear more form than substance, ours sometimes seem uncouth; if we remark that the cast-iron conventions reared against free and casual social intercourse between the sexes is offensive, Latin Americans may

think of all they have heard of petting, gin weddings and serial divorce and decide that La Señora Grundy knows best.

It seems rather trite to say that what is needed is more knowledge and understanding. Not the kind that comes from conferences and committees; that is good in its way, but such organized and official good fellowship chiefly affects the microscopic minority who need it least, and many of these specialized contacts are a little like Esperanto congresses—important to the initiated but unobserved by the general public.

The mechanics of understanding are not difficult: more visiting lecturers in colleges, clubs and schools; more instruction in Spanish and Portuguese; more courses in Latin American subjects, in high schools as well as colleges (only eighteen high schools in the whole United States reported such courses in 1934); more translations of South American authors; above all, more travel, more study and vacation trips for students. A few years of this and no one will be apologizing to a Brazilian for ignorance of Spanish; no one will say "Colombia? Oh, that's the one that has no sea coast!" Schoolgirls will no longer say, as they did to a little Colombian friend of mine in New York the other day, "Of course, you wear native dress when you are down there." The doubting exporter who recently remarked to someone I know that he would like to shift some of his cut-off European shipments to Colombia, but that the thought of the transportation "all the way to the Argentine and then farther down still" made him hesitate, will be reassured. When our nearest South American neighbor is mentioned, it will not be necessary to painstakingly eliminate Columbia University and British Columbia before one's meaning is clear.

If Colombia is to be something nearer and dearer than a fellow occupant of the Western Hemisphere—and the United States has spared no effort to make evident its official wishes in this direction—the much talked of solidarity must be one of inclination as well as convenience. Tactful forms and a consistently maintained attitude of respect and conciliation have accomplished much; Colombia is coming to believe that our intentions are reasonably honorable even if they hold more than the simple devotion of a stalwart heart. It is not easy to exactly define and describe a sphere of influence, beyond the

general consideration that it is nicer to have one than to be one. The Caribbean is undoubtedly ours, however. Dislocation of trade relations with Europe and the depressive economic effects of the war have stimulated Colombia's willingness to accept the situation, but beyond the arguments of interest or practicality, there is a growing ideological and emotional sympathy.

This attitude is not just a matter of hopeful conjecture. It is expressed by all but the cast-iron conservatives who, feeling that the business of an opposition is to oppose, devote themselves to it with a kind of dutiful violence on whatever issue is most timely. The position of the present Administration is unequivocal, and we may leave the last word to Dr. Luis López de Mesa, as set forth in the 1939 Report of the Ministry of Foreign Relations:

"North America wishes to stimulate the economy and culture of the Latin peoples of this continent, and with its vigorous will to action is applying those means which it judges most suitable and opportune to that end. . . . We recognize with gratitude the great benefits that this North American policy will bring to the progress of our own country, without ignoring those which will, in equity, result to the United States. . . . Because the United States must consolidate its own defenses on an extended plan, and because of its special situation with regard to the Panama Canal, it has come to be believed that secret pacts have been concluded of warlike defensive intention: it is my duty to inform the people and the Congress of Colombia that these pacts do not exist, nor have they been suggested, nor are they necessary. We know the duties of friendship, neighborliness, solidarity and common interest sufficiently to act always in harmony with them."

CHAPTER XXXII

Trade Winds Blow South

A FEW MONTHS AGO I was talking to a Colombian of wide culture and extreme intelligence. We had both returned to New York at the exact moment when the great fifth-column scare hit the eastern seaboard, and we were both a little dizzy, for although press and public opinion in Colombia had been distinctly pro-Ally in tone, there had been none of the supercharged atmosphere that prevails, for one reason or another, so frequently here. Stepping off the steamer in New York had something of the effect of stepping into a high wind. My Colombian friend was divided between amazement and laughter.

"I have had innumerable interviews since I have been here," he said, "and visited a number of plants. And without a single exception I hardly had time to shake hands before I was taken aside and asked in tones of awful portent, 'Tell me, what about the Fifth Column in Colombia? Is it true that there is German penetration in your country?'"

He looked into his cocktail glass, smiled gently and added:

"So I told them, 'No, only North American.'"

There is almost no German capital invested in Colombia (when I remarked this to Colombians, they answered promptly: "Only human capital"). Our own stake is very different. Apart from loans, we had in 1936, according to the U. S. Department of Commerce, direct investments amounting to \$108,000,000. Largely owing to new petroleum development and exploration, the 1940 total might be between one hundred and forty-five and

one hundred and fifty millions, though exact figures are not available.

A hundred and fifty million dollars is about one seventh the capital with which the United States Steel Corporation was formed; it is equal to one thirty-seventh the total foreign dollar bonds outstanding; it is one three-hundredth of the United States national debt, and according to recent calculations, it could be comfortably covered in eight days by the pennies and nickels we drop into coin machines. It is also a lot of money, even in this age of casual billions. Let us see what it means in the case in point.

It means oil. Perhaps 80 per cent of our direct Colombian investment is in this field. Tropical Oil, whose great-grandpapa is Standard of New Jersey, has averaged a \$19,000,000 annual exportation over a period of fourteen years, and refines locally about ten million gallons of crude a month, most of it for sale in the domestic market. The cash yield to the Government, once almost entirely a matter of royalties, has been tripled since taxes were instituted in 1936; last year it amounted to 9,600,000 pesos, equivalent to \$5,470,000. Texaco-Socony's Colombian Petroleum, in production since the end of 1939, now furnishes about one fifth of the total exportation, which for 1941 has been estimated, perhaps optimistically, at better than 26,000,000 barrels. Because of the high grade of Petrolea crude, Colombian Petroleum's recovery brings greater returns to the Company, and hence to the Government, than the volume might seem to indicate—the 6-per-cent-at-tidewater royalties might have run to something like 650,000 pesos in the first year—but it does not count in the tax returns. The two producing companies, plus the eight or nine who are just looking, paid out altogether 15,670,000 pesos to Colombian employees in 1939.

Next, it means bananas. United Fruit's subsidiary, the Magdalena Fruit Company, controls 90 per cent of the exportation, shipping annually between six and eight million bunches, for an average value, in the period from 1936 to 1940, of \$4,628,000. This is only a little more than half the 1929 return, but bananas both cost more and bring less than they did a few years ago; a recent United States government report puts the dollar value in 1938 at 42 per cent less than that of

1929, and increased production has only slightly bettered the yearly figures.

It means mines. A great part of the large-scale gold mining is in the hands of North American concerns, although in this country of "golden-sanded rivers" and widely distributed deposits there is a well-developed indigenous industry as well as an assortment of British, Belgian, Swedish and other enterprise. The total gold yield in Colombia has soared of late years, owing to new investments, improved methods introduced by the foreign companies and to the monetary policy of the United States Treasury; in 1939, the total recovery was, in U.S. currency, around \$19,750,000, of which it has been estimated about one half was that of North American-owned mines, including Canadian. The present policy of the Colombian government permits the foreign companies to export up to 40 per cent of the value of their production. Platinum, usually found together with gold in Colombia, is a drop in the export bucket nowadays; the value is under that given to gold, and the total production only comes to a little over 1 per cent of exportation.

Oil, mines, bananas—these are our chief interests. But beyond these, there are public utilities, ports, transportation (Avianca), construction, plants, agencies and so forth. Very prominently there are the loans that were made with a certain abandon between 1924 and 1928. In those four hectic years there were twenty different bond issues (not counting those of corporations, without Government guarantees), nearly 64 per cent of them departmental, municipal or corporate. Altogether they make the interesting total of \$145,891,205 outstanding. About \$27,287,000 has been repaid. On the whole, they have been well expended. An English economist, often quoted, has criticized the construction of both a road and a railway between the two great, and until then unconnected, valleys of Colombia on the grounds that since both had outlets (by uncertain river navigation) to the sea, such communications were unnecessary. It does not, however, seem excessive for a country to wish to link its two great productive regions for its own domestic convenience. Roads, ports, residential developments, water systems, filtration plants, power developments—the list is long.

This, however, is not the point that makes the subject of loans a tender one.

All such politico-economic diplomacy is two-edged these days. The creditor thinks that he is not getting the return that he should, whereas the debtor feels an obscure resentment born of his obligation and doubts whether the motives of his benefactor will stand scrutiny. Both are right, and both are wrong. Certainly, if gratitude is a lively sense of favors to come, benefaction is often a keen anticipation of future gratitude.

On the subject of Colombian debts, volumes could be written. The Colombian argues: (a) many of the loans were practically rammed down their throats, and anyway, in those times everyone was a little haywire; (b) coffee, which is 90 per cent of Colombia's net export list (of which more later), was then at 19 to 25 cents a pound, whereas in 1940 it was under 8; (c) the loans were made when the dollar was at 1.05 pesos, whereas now it is at 1.75, an increase of 70 per cent; (d) it is immoral to expect 6 to 8 per cent interest when all investment returns have decreased so much in the meantime and the U.S. bank rate has gone from 3 per cent to 1 per cent; (e) other debtor countries, some of them with heavy cash deposits in the United States, have not only had the interest rate reduced but have been forgiven a large part of the principal; (f) in any case, they have offered (December 1940) to pay \$45,000,000 in installments over the next twenty years, which is more than Great Britain has done on her \$5,574,430,793.82 principal-and-interest debt, and finally, (g) they haven't got the necessary exchange. North American bondholders limit themselves to saying, "They took the money, didn't they? When do they pay it back?"

It is obvious that Colombia's debts (using the term in the large sense, to include municipalities) will not be paid so long as the economy of the country is a matter for concern and the immediate future one for anxiety. It is far more likely that fresh loans will be solicited. The depression in Colombia was prolonged, and even in 1939, when the quantity of her export was one and one half times that of 1929, the dollar return was only 65 per cent of the 1929 value. With the development of the European war, one third of her foreign trade was cut off. An

increase in the standard of living and purchasing power of her people can be nothing but a fond dream as long as it is only by virtue of cheap labor that she can enter the world markets at all, and new fields of production and new markets cannot be created without adequate capital. This may seem strange to anyone who thinks of Colombia as a country bursting with exportable natural resources. Actually, there are two characteristics of Colombia's foreign trade that set it apart and which must be kept in mind if the figures are to mean anything: the practical division of her export into gross and net, and the one-product type of what is left.

At first glance, Colombia's balance of trade seems to be favorable—not by a great deal, but enough to put her on the credit side. In 1937 her total exports were \$104,176,000 and her imports \$95,972,000—eight million odd to the good. In 1938 the balance went down to less than \$2,225,000, but it was still apparently on the right side of the ledger. But the picture changes when the petroleum, bananas and platinum, directly exported by foreign concessionaires, are subtracted. Together, these made up 29.1 per cent of her entire 1937 export list, and 32.5 per cent of that of 1938; they figure in the national economy as the business profits of the star boarder figure in the landlady's budget. What is left, respectively 70.9 per cent and 67.5 per cent, can be counted as *Colombian* trade, including the Government gold export. Thus the effective balance, including gold, was in deficit: by \$16,700,000 in 1937 and by \$23,890,000 in 1938. Some part of this is recovered in a roundabout way through peso purchases made by foreign concerns—how much would be difficult to say; Tropical brought \$3,450,000 into the country in 1939. It must also be considered that a part of one of Colombia's heaviest import categories—machinery, pipes and tubes, iron and steel products—is borne, in a variable degree, by the same concessionaires who do the direct exporting; the Colombian Petroleum and Sagoc were largely responsible for four million dollars' worth of drilling apparatus and oil-line pipe in 1938—a part of their investment, but also of Colombia's import list. Without venturing into labyrinthine discussion of the exact role of the Government gold monopoly

in the trade picture, the 1938 score reads about like this (in millions of dollars):

Government gold exports	10.6
Direct foreign-concessionaire exports	26.1
All other exports	54.6
Imports	89.0

This rather depressing picture does not apply in the same measure to trade with the United States, at least not in those years. We bought more from Colombia (always including Uncle Sam's gold purchases) than we sold—\$16,690,000 worth in 1937 and \$3,424,000 in 1938. Without the trading in gold, however, the shoe would have been on the other foot—which is why Colombia's gold exports so closely match her total production. In 1939, according to the estimate of the United States Tariff Commission, the value of exports from the United States to Colombia increased by more than \$10,000,000 while merchandise imports from Colombia, exclusive of gold, suffered a slight falling off. The exportation of gold was \$23,200,000—an all-time high, and about \$4,000,000 more than was produced in that year.

Here we come to the second peculiarity of the foreign-trade situation: the fact that almost all Colombia's receipts, other than for gold or currency, result from the sale of coffee. Since coffee is nine tenths of what is left when oil, bananas and platinum are subtracted from the mercantile list, it is clear that without it the purchasing power abroad of her citizens would be practically nil. There would be no money to pay for the machinery and apparatus, the radios and automobiles, the iron and steel and chemicals, the cotton and textiles that she buys from us to the extent of 51.2 per cent of her total importation. Before the war disrupted transoceanic trade, one quarter of this commodity went to Europe, and the remaining three fourths was sold to the United States. In 1940 general overproduction aggravated by the choke-off of the European trade sent low prices lower, forcing the two-pesos-a-bag subsidy in order that there should be any coffee exportation—and any importation—at all.

Thanks to the new Coffee Quota Plan, New York prices have risen sharply of late, but years of thin times have roused the authorities to realization of the perils in dependence on a single export crop, and plans are afoot to promote a more diversified agriculture and to develop national resources and industry in an internal cycle of production that will relieve the import list while bettering domestic conditions.

Colombia has plenty of good cards left in the pack. Those which belong primarily to the home deal can be looked at later; some can only be played abroad, and as things now are, abroad means us. If Colombia needs to find new industries and new markets, the United States needs new and safe sources of supply. Everyone has awakened to the gravity of dependence on trans-Pacific sources for both tin and all the natural rubber—575,000 tons annually—consumed by our industry, and the realization may have far-reaching effects. Not so many of us remember that cinchona bark (quinine), once exclusively an Andean product, is now another monopoly of the Dutch East Indies. And there are other tropical raw products, necessary to United States' manufactures, that are brought from sources so far away that the supply cannot always be assured and which are either indigenous to South America or might be readily transplanted there: gums and oils like *karaya* and *gambiar* and *demar* and *babasú*; the mild and undramatic tapioca; tonka beans, and castor beans (abundant in Colombia) whose oil has uses beyond the familiar one of childhood, such as lubrication for airplane engines. Vanilla beans, for instance, which come from Madagascar, used to sell for \$1.00 a pound; they are now at \$6.50—which is why the little bottle you buy at the grocer's has "fortified with artificial flavoring" written on the label; research would determine whether the "Bourbon" flavor could be maintained in Colombia, where the vines grow wild.

Perhaps, now that the gorgeous orchids of Medellín (which retail there at ten cents) are being flown to New York, some of the fruits that add so much to the joy of living in Colombia will be sent to our markets—chirimoyas, which taste like strawberries and cream; the giant loganberries, two inches long, that flourish near Fusagasugá; *curubas*, *grenadillas*, and the insuperable *pitahaya*, queen of fruits.

The effect of the war on Colombian economy has been already studied to some purpose. In November 1939 the Ministry of Foreign Relations, in a remarkable publication entitled *Nuestra Revolución Económica* (*Our Economic Revolution*), devoted the final chapters to this question. The considerations and conclusions are obvious enough today; what gives them special interest is the fact that they were drawn up in April 1939, five months before the outbreak of hostilities. It was foreseen that in case of war, loss of the European market would be fairly complete. Twenty-two million pesos' worth of normal sales to England and the continent are written off entirely, and against the remainder of the European export list—which in 1938 amounted to 35,585,000 pesos, or 24.6 per cent of the gross merchandise exportation—there is a large and discomfoting question mark. The study—which did not envisage the Coffee Quota Plan—reaches the conclusion that owing to both outright shutdown in trade and increased competition among producers in the New World to place their surpluses in the remaining markets, all but .06 per cent of Colombia's export goods will be affected by the conflict across the Atlantic—most of them adversely.

Obviously the 44.8 per cent of Colombia's purchases that were made in Europe will be affected exactly as her sales are affected. About two thirds of them came from Germany (including Czechoslovakia), who bought from Colombia many products for which other countries seem to have no use; Great Britain furnished 27.5 per cent, with France, Holland, Sweden and Belgium next in order and Turkey bringing up the rear with a pathetic and mysterious purchase for \$4.56. By a determined effort, Colombia can produce—must, indeed—some of these commodities herself; some she could buy from us if her means allow; some she will have to do without.

The probable effect on the domestic economy of the nation is foreseen, not surprisingly, as a thoroughgoing depression. Revenues of every kind, from port dues and customs to taxes, will be cut; the standard of living, low enough in all conscience now, will go down. The publication of the Ministry of Foreign Relations lists in depressing detail the results for Colombia of the then-nonexistent European war: decrease in exports and

imports; unfavorable balance of trade; further devaluation of the peso; drainage of gold reserves; "increased domestic purchasing power of the peso"—i.e., lower prices; "paralysis" of Government large-scale spending for public works and the like; decrease in revenue; fiscal crisis and economic depression. The measures recommended to minimize the effects of the war are appended: an effort to balance imports and exports; an active search for substitute markets; conservation of normal banking facilities; bolstering of the gold reserves (foreign loan); fostering and encouragement of natural industry (foreign loan); the creation of a Bank of Industrial Development (foreign loan again).

Many of these measures have already been put into effect, thanks to the energy of the administration in Bogotá and a modest \$10,000,000 from the Export and Import Bank. In December 1940 a permanent agreement was proposed by which Colombia will repay \$45,000,000 principal and interest of the dollar bonds outstanding, in installments over a period of twenty years; reportedly there will be a conversion, with new bonds for old, which will bring down the interest rate. The internal debt is to be consolidated and converted; a planned economy is to be developed. The Industrial Development Institute is to become fact. By every means, financial, educational and constructive, the development of diversified crops is to be furthered.

The possible effects on inter-American trade and relation if the United States actively intervenes in the present struggle in Europe are hard to foresee. (Theoretically it would be impossible to continue to uphold a doctrine of noninterference from east to west if there is open interference from west to east a second time within a quarter of a century.) Colombia, for example, is explicitly in favor of closer co-operation with the United States, and the sympathies of her citizens are more engaged with the British than with the German cause. Very definitely, however, she does *not* want to be mixed up in any extraneous wars. And unfortunately we have talked and written too much about the danger to American business in German trade with Latin America to expect that our participation would

be interpreted solely as a disinterested defense of moral principles. Tactically this frank emphasis on the commercial aspect has been an error, since it has been concerned not with domestic adjustment of economy to enable the United States to give its southern customers the same advantages they have had from other traders, but rather with elimination of lower-price, easier-term competition. Absurdly, it seems to say to South America: "Come on and help crush Germany and lose a favorable market."

Naturally, if a third or more of Colombia's foreign trade is being forcibly deflected from Europe, it would be nice to have it deflect in our direction. But beyond the temporary question is the long-term one of the indefinite future, not as political domination but as international commerce. At present our forebodings are frankly and vocally concerned with a victorious, or at least an undefeated, Germany, whose methods and capacities would make her a formidable rival for South American business, anxious and able to encroach on that more-than-half share of Colombia's buying which we now enjoy, introducing her political theories and influence by the vehicle of trade. The problem goes beyond this. We cannot, even indirectly, oblige any country to do business with us rather than with someone else and keep our own soul. But as the great Camilo Torres remarked, "Man is not the enemy of his own felicity." If it is more advantageous to trade here than elsewhere, we need have no doubt that the South American countries will trade with the United States. And if the advantages are equal, all factors considered, they may prefer to trade here because of sentiment.

A large proportion of what we sell to Colombia consists of commodities that she cannot produce as yet for herself and which it is not possible for her to do without. Not all of them, however, are unobtainable elsewhere. Machinery and apparatus, radios and sewing machines, drilling, plant and mining equipment have been supplied by us to the extent of three fourths of the whole importation of such articles; motor vehicles and accessories are bought practically entirely from the United States; we sell large quantities of iron and steel and their semi-manufactured products, foodstuffs and textiles, raw cotton, chemicals and "luxury goods."

Commerce is a matter of convenience, and the crux is to harmonize the opposed conveniences of buyer and seller. This, like other self-evident truths, is simple enough until one begins to try to work it out in practice. In the case under consideration it is about as manageable as an octopus. How are American manufacturers to continue to sell their products if the cost of production obliges them to ask a price above that of their European competitors? How are they to hold the cash business of customers who can buy for less elsewhere on credit? If they think of putting up plants abroad for manufacture in the consumer countries, what about inexportable profits? What about our purchasing of the products that our customers must sell in order to buy—products of which there is often a too-abundant supply or which we ourselves produce in embarrassing quantities?

The question, boiled down to its essence, seems to be: What does the United States want—and how much? As one Colombian remarked to me, not without point:

“After all, no one *has* to be a great man. But if that is what he wants, he must be ready to pay what it costs—in expense and risk and responsibility. If the United States wants South America as its economic and political preserve—the two are inseparable nowadays—well and good. But it will cost something.”

Colombia, apart from that right “to trade with all parts of the world” set forth in the Declaration of Independence, buys from Germany not because of an inner urge, but because she gets terms that she has so far been unable to obtain from the United States. It is the difference between long-term credits and cash on the barrel head, aggravated by the time-lag, normally two months or more, which long transportation imposes between the date of purchase of goods in the United States and that when the importer can begin merchandising—and it is not peculiar to Colombia.

It does not matter whether you speak with an Ecuadorian or a Peruvian, the burden is the same: “If our businessmen can sell for better prices and buy on more favorable terms from Germany, then it is not to be wondered at that they buy from and sell to Germany. And German manufacturers come to meet

us in other ways: by adapting their products to our requirements, by learning just what our necessities and conditions are, by giving us what we want, not what they think we ought to want. When we order something for Ambato or Puna, they know where these places are, how long and by what means the merchandise will travel, what packing is necessary. And their representatives live in our countries not as if in temporary exile, but as if they liked it. Many of them settle down to spend their lives here, to marry and make a real home. They give as well as take—not, perhaps, in money, but of themselves.”

There is no teacher like an adversary.

CHAPTER XXXIII

Wild Animals I Have Not Known

THE FAUNA OF COLOMBIA is varied, abundant and sometimes stranger than the feeble imagination of man could invent without alcoholic stimulation. There are hundreds of species of mammals, from jaguars to mice; hundreds of reptiles, from crocodiles to snakes no longer than your finger; thousands of birds, from fourteen-foot condors to the smallest of humming-birds. (There are also, alas! tens of thousands of insects—in the widest and most unpleasant sense of the term.) A number of these seem to defy classification, and even those familiar to science frequently display an ostentatious idiosyncrasy, very satisfying to the unscientific mind.

Tapirs are comparatively normal appearing, but the capybara, the 150-pound, web-footed rodent of the rivers, is like something dreamed by Walt Disney after a late and heavy supper, and the altogether incredible giant anteater appears to have been created in a moment of robust humor. The *matamatá* turtle is another highly improbable work of nature: its shell looks like a piece of cloth draped over a couple of dozen eggs, its legs are long, its claws sharp; it has an elongated neck of elaborate rococo design and a unique head garnished with petal-like plates that end in a kind of periscope. The general effect is rather as if it had run head on into a fancy funnel. After this the pearl-bearing turtles of the upper Magdalena, as recorded by that eager and inaccurate naturalist, Colonel Hamilton, are merely a pleasing variant of the norm. The *matamatás*, if they produced anything, would turn out costume jewelry. Even the justly famed armadillo is not an ordinary mammal. I for one

can fully understand the reasoning of Gonzalo Fernández de Oviedo y Valdés, author of a noted *General y Natural Historia de las Indias* (Seville 1535), when he first encountered the prudent little animal. Oviedo had an inquiring mind, and observing that the armadillo is outfitted exactly like a war horse in armor, he was moved to speculate whether armor and caparisons were first invented by people who knew about armadillos, or whether armadillos got that way from seeing caparisoned war horses. An interesting point.

Many of the "wild" beasts of Colombia have mild and pleasant natures and would make excellent pets for families who find Scotties unoriginal. The *manatí*, or river cow, with "a head like an ox and a body 20 feet around," which has five kinds of flesh (beef, chicken, pork, veal and fish), is a docile, in-offensive creature that has been happy in captivity. We have it on the authority of Gómara that although "it is so ugly it could not be uglier," it is capable of inspiring true affection. The Cacique of Guaynabo, whose name was Carametexi, kept one in a small lagoon and christened it Mato, which means Magnificent; when a flood washed Mato into the river and the outside world, the Indians mourned her disconsolately. Perhaps the *manatí* has a rather specialized appeal, being only suitable for large estates, but there are many other possible pets that are more convenient. Honey bears—little taffy-colored raccoons—are playful and affectionate, and would be an addition to any home; *perros de monte* (exact species doubtful), versatile animals that can bark and yelp like a dog as well as make chirpy noises of their own, are not unlike large honey bears, and they are easily tamed. I know of people who keep sloths, but I can only recommend doing so to those of equable temperament; any nervous person would go mad waiting for his dumb friend to complete a gesture, and the strain of living with a permanently upside-down companion must be considerable.

For occupants of 2½-room apartments there are squirrels no bigger than a mouse, and monkeys that fit into your hand. Suburban couples might well invest in a *tente*, a bird like a small black trumpeter, which believes that its mission in life is to act as nursemaid. The *tente* attaches itself to children with conscientious devotion, following them wherever they may go; it takes

care of minor matters on its own responsibility (it is said to be able to pick an insect from a baby's cheek without touching the skin), and screams for help when something too big to handle alone seems to menace its charge. Into its long-legged, soft-plumed body has transmigrated the soul of a shepherd dog; it is demonstrative with its masters and "barks" at strangers.

It is not always easy for the amateur to determine just what any given animal may be, for accounts are often vague and names have been taken over from the aborigines; the difficulty is further increased by the Colombian peasant's habit of calling anything smallish and hairy a fox, most of the cat tribe tigers, and anything still more doubtful by the name of its nearest similar. *Perro de monte* means mountain dog, but any relationship it may have with the canine race could only be through some hitherto undreamed bar sinister; *leoncitos* are golden-maned marmosets; water cats are certainly unrelated to the feline family. The native name for water cat is *guagua*; it is a tailless rodent that resembles more than anything else an out-size, striped, white-and-brown, aquatic guinea pig. The *guagua* makes delicious eating, if you can extract it from the burrow where it reportedly lives with venomous water snakes in an unnatural but amicable menage.

A lot of Colombian zoology is interrogative. Are there really "polar" bears in the Central Cordillera? And what about those other white species of which one hears—the white opossum of the Cerro Munchique, the white deer of the Andean snows (I have seen a skin), the blind white crocodiles of the Patía delta swamps? The *guatín*, excitingly described to me as a small kangaroo, turns out to be only an agouti, which changes its trot to wallaby-like leaps when pressed for time. But I am uncertain about the beautiful animal I saw in the Catatumbo—jet black, with a bushy tail and a thick silky pelt, barred across the shoulders by a startling band of brilliant yellow. It might be a variety of *tayra*, the big arboreal weasel of the jungle—and then again, it might not. The peons, needless to say, call it a fox. (About another furry inhabitant of these just-penetrated forests I cannot be precise; it was merely described to me as "the funny striped one.") Nothing, however, explains the antediluvian saurian of the Oponcito swamps. Unless my three

eyewitness informers, all American engineers, indulged in the same brand of liquor, this jungle mystery is black, slick, about twelve feet long, with a small rounded head and widely spread legs, and it can run remarkably fast. It seems to be peculiarly like a Komodo Dragon, and this is very odd indeed, for the Dragon is the largest of the Gargantuan Monitor lizards, and it has never been found outside certain of the Sunda Islands, west of Borneo.

It is very hard for an old timer to resist giving an earful to the innocently inquiring guest. The journalist who was told, and who subsequently published, that owing to the steepness of the terrain Colombian farmers could only plant their perpendicular fields by shooting seed from a gun, is a fairly recent example. I pass on the next what-is-it without bias. This sounds like a weird cross between a wild ass and an antelope; now rather scarce, it used to run in large herds in the highlands near Bucaramanga. Dark in color, with a white stripe down its back, it has a horse's tail, an equine but spade-muzzled head, round-tipped ears, a horsy body . . . and cloven hooves. Take it away, Frank Buck.

Certainly someone—though not, perhaps, a scientist—should find out more about the *Monos Blancos*, the white monkey people who once, proud and powerful, ruled the jungled hills from below Zapatoca to the Cerro Bobali. There is only one left now in the Lebrija country, and she is called the Old Woman of the Mountain. She does not show herself, but she sometimes carries off a lone peon to live with her and serve her, and he never returns. I do not know whether it was La Vieja or one of her relatives who once intervened to save the unmathematical purser of a river boat. This is how the story was told to me:

"Years ago there was a purser on one of the Magdalena boats that plied between Barranquilla and Honda. He was a good purser, and also honest, only he had little book learning, and he could not manage to keep his accounts. Voyage after voyage the owners would demand his records, and always he would make excuses. This went on for two years; finally, just as he was starting upriver, they told him that either he would present a complete accounting on his return or he would be dismissed.

"The purser was very unhappy, for if it was difficult for him

to figure the shipments at the time, it was impossible for him to disentangle months of business. He had a wife and nine children in Soledad, and besides he supported his wife's parents and an aunt who lived with them, as well as his own father and widowed sister with her five young sons. And the thought of the shame that would fall upon him was almost worse than the loss of his salary. You can imagine how he felt.

"One night when the boat was tied up to the bank the purser went into the village to forget his troubles. While he was gone a gigantic White Monkey came on board and went into his cabin, and when the purser returned in the morning, he found his books made up and balanced to the last centavo."

A year or so ago the laborers in El Centro swore that a White Monkey was hanging around a certain spot on the road to a distant part of the field. The *Mono Blanco* was ten feet high, with huge round eyes a foot apart, and the peons absolutely refused to pass by that route. Investigation discovered an unusually big jaguar, who was evidently in the habit of lying on a shelf of rock above the road. This whole district, much of which is rugged and little known, has a strong slant of its own on natural history. It was a native of the Lebrija who gave useful first-aid directions for salamander bites—an unlikely accident, but one that apparently holds more danger than might be supposed. When bitten by a salamander, one should run like the proverbial bat out of hell to the nearest water and drink; the race is to the swift, for the salamander runs too, and if he gets there first, you die. Actually, the bite of an *iguana* would be a lot more painful, though less so than his fearsome appearance would indicate. The iguana, by the way, not only jumps with the speed of a catapult, but also takes flying dives into water, where he swims rapidly in an upright position, always in a perfectly straight line.

In the marsupial division, tropical opossums are comfortably familiar. But there is a marsupial water rat with webbed feet that is slightly off the beaten track, and certain others with atrophied pouches who bring up their grublike young in nests before transferring them to the maternal back are hard to place offhand. Even crocodiles have their unexpected aspects; apparently unrewarding reptiles without emotional nuances,

they are not lost to the finer things of life. Gentleman crocs are touchingly paternal, and while at first glance they do not seem to be sensitive souls, they are said to be strangely impressionable to the right approach. In the Oriente the Indian hunters stalk a chosen victim in a slow glide, murmuring a soothing, monotonous phrase the while; hypnotized, he lies immobile until a husky machete cuts off his head. A method used on the Magdalena is more sporting: this simple trick is to wait until the croc opens his mouth wide, and then plant a sharpened stick between his upper and lower jaws, leaving him yawning and defenseless. It would seem to be a game for experts only; I have often wondered what happens to beginners.

Colombian wild pigs, too, are less banal than the name implies. They are not very large, but they are fierce; jaguars prudently withdraw before a band of *sainos* on the move. The kind called *huanganos*, which travel in herds of seven or eight hundred head, employ approved shikari technique in hunting: forming a circle, like Hindu beaters, they gradually close in, driving their prey before them. The big cats follow at a respectful distance, hoping to pick off a straggler; since the herd turns back to defend its brother, the jaguar must have a solid tree handy for refuge, as otherwise he will be overrun and his bones picked clean. The *pécari*'s most original feature, however, is anatomical. Four hundred years ago the Conquistadores were intrigued by "the small swine with their navels on their backs" which they found in the New Realm, for the wild pig are provided with a dorsal gland, which gives out an odor so appalling that "it serves to put tigers to flight and strikes hunters with vertigo."

No one knows how many birds there are in Colombia. Hundreds of them are old friends in slightly different dress, and doubtless the others are household words to ornithologists, but to me they are merely winged color and exotic names. My favorites, aside from the formal beauty of pink or scarlet ibis and blue herons, are those that strike a line for themselves. The gaudy and improbable tucán, whose enormous beak looks to have been stuck on like a false nose, is one of these; his expression, surprised and chagrined, says that the joke is in questionable taste, but that his social aplomb is insufficient to

cope with the matter. There is a distinctly abnormal owl that digs burrows, or takes them over ready made from recently digested owners; and the rapacious *churuquera*, which imitates the amorous squeak of the *churucu* mouse and lures its too-responsive dinner practically into its talons, is undoubtedly too *rusé* to be an ordinary eagle. A tall bird with spurs on its wings and a voice like a rusty file is called an *araponga*; being imperfectly aquatic, it is the happy possessor of a built-in, air-inflated life preserver. The *garrapatero*—a non-conformist cuckoo—perches on cattle and removes the ticks; when its services are required, the tapirs and other quadrupeds summon it with a special whistling call.

Insects, broadly including all creepy crawly things, are only simpáticos to those who have inexplicably chosen entomology as their career. These people speak glowingly of the Oriente in the wet season, but they are alone in their enthusiasm; the smaller orders of life in the tropics are not only irritating but sometimes frightening. Rivera's description in *La Vorágine* of the carnivorous *tambocha* ants reads like a particularly horrible Last Judgment. Wingless wasps, they march in billions, and the noise of their advance is like a fire in the brush. The wild beasts flee before them, and all the small secret life of the forest forgets normal caution in the grip of this one great terror, for everything trapped in the path of the tambochas is devoured "with the rapidity of a dissolvent acid." A much milder genus is that of the *casadoras*; these, while upsetting, can be extremely useful. When their battalions advance on a house, there is no hope of turning them; the only thing to do is to remove everything possible, including yourself, and wait till they have passed. They will have cleaned your bungalow as efficiently as an exterminator service. These are trained armies, maneuvering in disciplined masses; the widow wasp (the only thing I ever saw move a peon to involuntary excitement) is a lonely and embittered individualist who meditates her crimes beforehand and digs her victim's grave in anticipation of the murder. The innumerable butterflies, on the other hand, are splendid beyond words, among them gigantic electric-blue ones eight or ten inches across, and those, almost as large, whose wings are an iridescent combination of blue and pale mauve, which one sees

made up into trays and other household ornaments. I have often wondered who bought them.

Snakes are far less dangerous than most people suppose; scientists in Panamá once calculated that the possibility of death from a bite was about equal to that of being struck by lightning. Most snakes are even more anxious to avoid humans than are humans to avoid snakes; those that fail to get out of the way usually owe their sluggishness to a full stomach, when the scales are pulled tight and skid like worn tires, and this in turn means a recent kill and depleted poison sacs. However, those deadly fellows that climb into bed with jungle travelers for warmth, though no doubt innocent of evil intention, are not the most desirable of bedfellows. Boa constrictors, the most spectacular of Colombian snakes, are rather good tempered on the whole; a hungry anaconda would be a nasty customer to meet on a summer evening, but one that has recently enclosed a pig or a young tapir is the most innocuous of creatures. Unfortunately, this prolonged digestive calm is not generally known, as one animal dealer found to his sorrow. He used to give his boas a heavy pre-shipment meal at Barranquilla and then relax during the voyage, but when one of his captives got loose and came wandering down the promenade deck, there was no time to explain its life and habits to the stampeding passengers before some gallant volunteers had heaved it overboard. Since, if you ever go to boa country, someone will tell you about the anaconda that swallowed a full-grown bull, I might as well tell it first. It got the bull down, with a slight effort, but choked to death on the horns.

Honesty compels me to say that the average abstemious visitor to Colombia has about as much chance of meeting a snake face to face as he has of meeting a puma—which is very little indeed. Dry-season travelers may never encounter so much as a scorpion or a centipede, though they will have to learn to take *cucarachas* for granted—the fine, full-bodied, sociable cockroaches of the tropics. The denizens of the forest have a healthy fear of man, the most savage animal of all, the carnivore that also kills for fun. They keep well hidden in their green refuge, whose perils are the ones they know; if you would learn more about them you must look for them, and it will not be easy.

CHAPTER XXXIV

Road to Tomorrow

Chacun est sa Parque à lui-même, et se file son avenir.—Joubert

COLOMBIA, having spent the greater part of the last century in an erratic course composed of rapid advances, sudden retreats and inconclusive if vigorous lateral movements from right to left and back again, is now on a straight track. It is an inviting, one might say an exciting, road, not because it is easy but because it runs to unexplored distances through new and varied terrain. Twice lucky, she has both a great deal to do and a great deal with which to do it. In fact at first glance the raw ingredients of progress—441,000 square miles of territory, a diversity of soils and climates, magnificent mineral deposits, ports on two oceans, a stable political system—would seem to indicate a future modeled all in a happy shade of rose. The prospect is not, however, quite so unrelieved. Here and there in this book some of the less sanguine aspects have been set forth; they are sufficient to temper any too-cheerful scene to decent moderation. Nevertheless it is not physical obstacles or what our genteel ancestors called “straitened circumstances” on the one hand, or the profusion of natural resources on the other, that will decide Colombia’s destiny. Her future does not depend on territory, though no one will deny that a lot of land is a useful thing for an up-and-coming country to have; it does not depend on subsoil riches, although oil and coal and gold and iron and all those other geological bounties are the sinews of success. A country might be laid out in solid bands of mineral

deposits; it might be awash with petroleum and cultivatable to the last inch, and if it were uninhabited it would not exist. Colombia's tomorrow depends upon the Colombians.

The determining human factor presents two problems: a quantitative one and a qualitative one. The first is simple; although the pressure of nine million people is insufficient to force development in a country of this size, the philoprogenitive inhabitants are steadily remedying matters. Should they continue to reproduce at the rate they have maintained with unflagging enthusiasm in recent decades, the Republic can look forward—other things being equal—to some thirty-six million citizens in another sixty-five years. (Presumably, nature and art will combine to limit this geometric progression; the thought of two hundred and eighty-eight million Colombians elbowing one another in the year 3000 is a little disconcerting.)

The matter of quality, however, cannot be left to biological instinct. The one immediate necessity is education—and by that I do not mean academic schooling. My personal conviction is that if by some miracle every peon and campesino between the Caribbean and the Putumayo were endowed tomorrow with grade-school learning and the modern outlook, the result would be disaster; for the modern outlook is demanding, and Colombia is not yet geared to satisfy it. What the proletariat needs first of all is something deeper and more difficult: a wise and careful building up of moral and physical stamina; education in cleanly, healthy living, in responsibility and co-operation. Something is being done, but it is only the beginning of a long pull. Upper-class Colombians are awake to the urgency of the problem, but they do not all look on it eye to eye.

In the dismal vault that passes for a lounge of the Hotel Granada in Bogotá—a hall that is an architectural *memento mori*—I one day sat in on a discussion of the whole question.

"The proletariat has been exploited long enough in the interests of capital," said a plump, intense young man in horn-rimmed spectacles. "Now, at last, we are teaching him that he has rights."

"You don't have to worry about planting that idea," replied an elderly manufacturer, rather sourly. "It's the easiest lesson in the book. What you should try to get across is that they come

tied up with obligations. Privilege is like a good sharp knife—fine if you know how to handle it and can refrain from carving up the neighbors. I don't say that the lot of the proletariat does not need improvement; God knows it does. But you can't start a teetotaler off on absinthe before he has even tasted beer. Remember the strikes and disorder *after* the labor laws?"

"You businessmen are all alike—scared about your profits. You still pay your men a peso and a quarter a day, don't you?"

"And you politicians are scared about your votes. Yes, I pay one twenty-five a day to the least-skilled workmen; others get up to five pesos. And I pay it every day of the year, including Sundays. Do you know what I get for it, by foreign standards of production? Less than two valid hours of work per day." He turned to me. "I didn't make that up. It's in a Government publication, dated 1939, and it's gospel truth."

"How is it figured?"

"Quite simply. It's on an annual basis. First one must deduct Sundays, holidays, average sick leave and the compulsory annual vacation. These add up to 120 idle days—four solid months—on full pay. That leaves, if everything goes perfectly, 245 eight-hour days. But the report goes on to say that because of imperfect technique and because of deliberate minimum effort the actual yield of a working day is only one third what it should be. Result: the equivalent, averaged over the year, of a two-hour day—in other words, 91 good days out of the 365 for which the men are paid."

The first speaker had been listening impatiently, and now he burst out:

"How can you expect to get a better return when wages are so low?"

"How can you expect us to pay more when the return is so small?"

The impassioned antiphonal duet was cut short by a quiet man on my right.

"Calm yourselves, children," he said with a smile. "You're both right, and you know it. You see, señora, how it is? We have to argue even when we are agreed. Statistics is a filly by Mathematics out of Caprice, but paper calculations apart, everyone recognizes that the standard of living of our laboring classes is

too low, both from the humanitarian point of view and from that of economic utility. Also everyone knows that the workers produce too little. We are even united on the solution: education.

"The pueblo is ignorant, but it is not stupid. It can be taught. And that is where *we*"—with a gesture at the occupants of the Granada's funereal armchairs—"come in. The country needs mechanics and artisans and skilled craftsmen and scientific farmers. All right, someone will have to teach them, and it can't be lawyers. We have so many doctors of law in Colombia that they trip one another up in the streets; shout "Eh, Doctor, your house is on fire!" in any social gathering, and two thirds of the men would make a rush for the door. What we want is agricultural specialists and master mechanics and veterinarians and experts in all the manual trades. We need trade schools. Did you know that in the whole Republic there are only 304 students enrolled in vocational schools? We need——"

"Money." It was the manufacturer again. "About the only good thing that can be said for our budget is that it balances. Give us eighty or a hundred million pesos to finance a complete program of economic development and education and we can make the country over and pay dividends."

"A hundred million and a program. I'm not sure the second isn't the more important—not a lot of lovely theories, but a scientifically worked-out plan, as practical as a blueprint for a construction job. It would have to be based on exact knowledge of the requirements for a cycle of domestic production, combined with a realistic inventory of our actual possibilities. And then it would have to be enforced. The sacred liberties of the individual, including his liberty to gum up the works if fancy so inclines, will get a slight jolt.

"Whether we will be sitting here in the same comfort when the time comes to put all this in effect I don't know. But I might point out that we are now sitting on upholstery of imported leather, resting our imported calf shoes on an imported carpet, drinking imported whisky from imported glasses and smoking imported cigarettes; that we will shortly cover our imported worsted suits with imported woolen overcoats, put on our



PHOTO RAMOS, ROGOTIA

SABANA ROAD

imported felt hats and our imported gloves, get in our imported cars and drive home—where we will change our imported percale shirts and imported ties, and shave with our imported razors and imported soap in front of the imported mirrors of our imported medicine cabinets above our imported wash basins. We will then eat dinner off imported plates and . . .”

“*Basta, hombre, no más!* That’s enough!”

“All right, finish it yourselves. But allow me to remind you that of all these things the only ones we could not turn out at home are the automobile and the whisky.”

Anyone familiar with Colombia could sit down with a copy of the import list and a pencil and work out a pretty fair estimate of the industrial opportunities as they now stand. Their yearly value, on the basis of present purchasing power, when half the population must devote the greater part of its expenditure to satisfying its hunger, has been set at thirty-six million pesos. This calculation does not contemplate subsidiary manufactures or new departures—both of which are like doors open to a Promised Land where the air is bright and the contours still uncertain. (One might quote, as a tangible example, the new products evolved from *pita*, a miracle fiber tougher than hemp and more absorbent than medical cotton that can be woven into cloth indistinguishable from heavy linen.)

Official studies go beyond business opportunities to wider considerations: to selective immigration, and to model self-contained agricultural colonies, for instance, though these are only part of a sometimes curiously minute examination of the material processes in the achievement of an essentially ideal design. (Looking forward impatiently to the new economic order, Colombians constantly remind one another of the danger of losing the old spiritual values and of giving allegiance to the soul-destroying gospel of success.) Inevitably the government is cast in the character of architect and superintendent. Opponents of centralized economic control object that, apart from its limitation of individual liberty, it presupposes superhuman excellence on the part of the controllers: a perfect government, nobly planned, to warn, to comfort and command, that shall be not only divinely wise but gloriously solvent. Those who believe in planning and a firm hand reply that theoretically

this is what is required of every government, and that that of Colombia has proved to be quite as near the heart's desire as any other. They add that the government is not an autonomous body but the directorate of a co-operative.

Abstract principles aside (a position to which expedience so often relegates them) it must be acknowledged that the advocates of a carefully devised and, if necessary, coercive program are well supplied with supporting—and freely illustrated—arguments, many of which stem from the type of land distribution. Because the country, divided into huge estates, is monopolized by a dog-in-the-manger minority feudally negligent of the commonweal? Not at all. Because 90 per cent of deeded rural property is owned by small proprietors, most of whom are children when it comes to scientific agriculture and sucking babes in matters of co-ordinated production—to say nothing of the potentially valuable acreage given over to squatter occupancy.

While so many seedling developments are being prepared for planting, two that might be very rewarding are getting scant attention. One is no more than a bit of wizened seed: handicraft. It is a point I am tempted to labor, but enough has been said of the early workmanship and of the naïve and neglected talents scattered here and there in Colombia to make it plain. It can be uncommonly useful commercially, but that is not, I think, its main role here. Art is a gentling thing in any form; to make beauty with one's hands is good for the soul.

The other promising shoot is tourist trade: the hidden import that does not appear in the commodity lists but which has been a pillar of strength to many a national budget. Naturally to have a tourist trade you must first catch your tourist, and this involves considerable initial outlay. Like every other business, it must advertise. The preferred method is by sun-drenched full-color cuts of laughing girls beautiful as a dream, posed gracefully against exotic backgrounds, or lounging (yearned over by godlike males) in well-bred abandon on ships that sail unruffled seas. These are horribly expensive, and even less luscious effects cost money. So do adequate hotels, and not every city in Colombia can boast of one that constitutes an attraction. People on a holiday are apt to consider food part

of the fun; they are not exhilarated by a procession of unimaginative starches flanked by meat that, while tasty, has the general consistency of a heavy-duty tire, even when offset by delicious bread, good butter and abundant fruit.

Then, too, visitors cannot be expected to ferret out by painful research a notion of what to see and how to see it. They do not care about wrestling despairingly with timetables. They want to be told. This means guide books, travel literature and efficient information offices manned by employees of the guide-philosopher-and-friend order. The country has superb material for nearly every sport, including skiing; it has large lakes at high altitudes (Tota, in the Cordillera near Sogamoso, could be reached by plane in two hours from the coast); it has innumerable mineral springs of great curative power. But foreign guests, and Colombians themselves, will only take them up in earnest when they are made easy and comfortable. All the comfort features are more important to foreigners, naturally; if tourists had the resource of resident friends they would be richly compensated for more inconveniences than they could well meet in a lifetime of roving, but few of them can hope to be so lucky.

All this being said, I will make a confession. The thought of Colombia turned into a Latin-American Switzerland appalls me. It sends a shudder down my back to imagine acquaintances saying: "Mocoa? Oh, my dear, when we were there it rained every day, and the golf was awful." Little twinges run through all my teeth at the idea of hearing someone exclaim, "Those quaint Dabeibas! We stayed at the Grand Hotel, and they had a model Indian village, quite clean of course, built in the grounds." I want Colombia to be known, but by those who want to *know* her. And how much she has to offer them!

Just beauty would be enough: the beauty of arrogant color and challenging skylines, of quiet hillside farms and flaunting gardens; the hard immensity of high páramos, the shock of inviolate snows proud above the jungle, the lovely serenity of green valleys. The other things are set to it as to music. There are no galleries of art or splendid palaces in Colombia, but if she cannot satisfy the desire for monuments of human artistry she is admirably equipped to satisfy many of the other curi-

osities and hungers that most of us conceal somewhere about us. I would not give a fig for anyone who could not respond to the thrill of buried treasure and lost mines—and Colombia has both. Breathes there a man who does not nurse a secret weakness for pirates? Colombia owns the islands of Providencia and San Andrés, whose palm-fringed beaches and woody hills were once a pirate stronghold. They lie far to the north and east of Cartagena, seventy-odd miles off Nicaragua, and their dark inhabitants are English-speaking Protestants in whose veins is the blood of Mansveldt's Walloons and French, and of bloody Morgan's brigands.

And who has never felt an inner hankering for discovery: to be "one of those daft people who open the way for wise men"? Part of Colombia's fascination is that everything is not already thumbled and catalogued. It is still perfectly possible for the amateur to make discoveries and for dilettantes to contribute something new to scientific knowledge. Archeology is circled with a question mark; botany and zoology, though less interrogative, are studded with blank or unfinished pages. There is a study to be made of the scientific elements in peasant superstition; there is the field of folklore and legend, where one can still, if one hurries, catch them alive before factories and movies and automobiles have run them underground. Aboriginal languages and traditions are unplumbed mysteries, but alas, they are not for the likes of most of us. Professor Manrique Casas of Bogotá, a great philologist who held until lately the chair of Oriental languages at the University of Stockholm, is undertaking fresh research in one language group.

On second thought, even the first-named subjects are not really visitor interests. They are part of Colombia's own future road, the questing, beckoning road whose end is over hills beyond hills. They are elements in the supreme good fortune which is hers—that her people are still pioneers. Not many of them have ever been to Tierradentro; very few have ever seen a *guatín*, and the remainder are indifferent to their loss; most of them are more familiar with Paris and New York than with Dabeiba and Sibundoy and prefer their perfectly appointed houses to a camp in the *monte*. But even if they should spend their lives between the office, the Country Club and the villas

of the suburbs, they are still pioneers. They are undertaking new things in untried spheres; setting themselves to build a new national spirit; harnessing still untamed riches to service; creating, not merely perfecting. And the boundaries of enterprise are far out of sight, for no one knows what resources and unperceived opportunities may as yet be unrevealed. It is only the morning and evening of the first day, and one can safely prophesy that those to follow will be neither short nor simple; but the Colombians, clinging fast to the substance of things hoped for, are not dismayed. With Masfield they can say: "My road shall be the road I made; All that I gave shall be repaid."

The conquest of Colombia is not finished and done with, a tale that is told, reduced to a thin two-dimensional paper life. It is now.

READING LIST

READERS with a taste for research and some knowledge of Spanish, who have access to such collections as the Library of Congress and the New York Public Library, will find indexed there a wealth of material on Colombia, including most of the great contemporary accounts of the Conquest. A list of the hundreds of volumes consulted in the course of this work does not, however, seem necessary here. Thus the books named below are in no sense a bibliography, but merely a brief selection of readily available reference works in English for those who would know a little more of a large subject.

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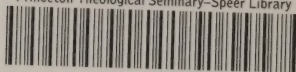
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